

Mennonite Historical Bulletin

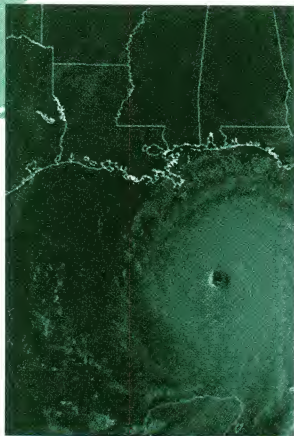
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Minding
Mennonite
Memory

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In this issue



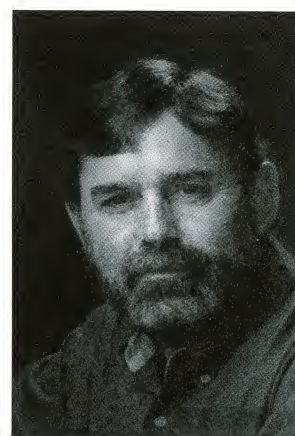
Page 4: Alejandra Urbizo, a young Mennonite resident of New Orleans, offers her first-hand notes on fear, faith and the future in light of her city's disaster. Urbizo chronicles the approach of Hurricane Katrina, her family's flight to Houston, Texas, and their discoveries upon return, including beans sprouting on the dining room table. "If we trust God with all that we have in us," Urbizo concludes, "we will know that the city can be better."



Page 7: Nurse practitioner Debby Lederach Gunden registered as a healthcare volunteer in the days following Hurricane Katrina and by September 11 found herself put to work in a "special needs" shelter in Thibodaux, Louisiana where she encountered evacuees whose names were their only remaining possessions.



Page 10: Hurricane Katrina inspired retired educator Bill Miller to join a northern Indiana MDS team and head south. Miller describes how he and his seven fellow volunteers, ages 64 to 72, responded to a call for assistance from the communities of St. Joe and Pearl River, Louisiana where they cleared debris, enjoyed warm hospitality, and encountered resilient optimism in the face of sobering devastation.



Page 16: Historian and educator Franklin Yoder, Kalona, Iowa, began serving as Interim Director of the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee in summer 2005. In his first "Back Page" feature as director, Yoder urges the telling of the whole history of the church, the inspiring tales as well as those less flattering: "We need to hear both, because all of them are our stories" and therefore show us the full picture of who we are.

The **Mennonite Historical Bulletin** is published quarterly by the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee and distributed to the members of Mennonite Church USA Historical Association.

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Hurricane Katrina's unfolding drama



Initial preparations for this issue of *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* coincided with the advent of Hurricane Katrina. As a new editor of this publication, I was eager to identify articles that would continue the *Bulletin's* tradition of engaging, historically relevant stories. Conversations with individuals connected to the Gulf States, the excellent early coverage of the hurricane in the Mennonite Church press, and consultation with members of the Historical Committee convinced me that Katrina's intrusion into American routines is significant, unfinished history.

The impact of Hurricane Katrina on American society is a complex story whose dimensions will be measured for years to come. Indeed, some of us at a distance from the Gulf States may be more familiar with the political noise surrounding this event than with the quieter, but crucial, interplay between appeals for help and gestures of assistance. That exchange has been moving life forward in stricken Gulf communities in mundane but tangible ways.

The three writers who share their Hurricane Katrina experiences in these pages give witness to the on-the-ground mundane. They offer revelatory particulars: grasshoppers eerily chirping in a blacked-out New Orleans; an evacuee hosed down in a bright yellow tent; a gift of bar oil from Lutheran donors to keep Mennonite chain saws running. We hear this month from a young woman whose family temporarily fled New Orleans, and from two volunteers who traveled to Louisiana in the weeks following Katrina. Their first-person articles by no means attempt to tell the whole story. They offer immediate perspective on history-in-the-making, not scholarly interpretation of a completed event. And these articles' sphere is limited to Louisiana, while of course Katrina affected a wider territory.

However narrowly focused, these stories, added to the archival evidence in this issue's Scrapbook pages, hint at the broader dialogue of disaster and relief, dispossession and hospitality that belongs to the larger Mennonite story. Heeding the impulse to help has never been without its complications, as our authors recognize. The pieces raise questions familiar in earlier times to Mennonite refugees *and* relief-givers: How much difference can one person make? Who will make wise decisions about where to rebuild? Who will take on the unglamorous long-term care of the destitute, once the world's attention has wandered? How do we proceed when disasters succeed one another: tsunami, hurricanes, earthquake? How do we keep faith when a cause appears lost? One basic answer may come in the colloquial reassurance an author reports overhearing amid the stench of a water-logged home in Slidell, Louisiana: "Hang in there baby."

Mennonite Disaster Service will continue to play a significant role in addressing Hurricane Katrina's damage. Other worthy organizations also solicit our church members' help. Our congregations will go on challenging us to bundle relief kits, make donations, refuel our chain saws. Perhaps the highly individual field reports offered here will suggest to each of us our own role in Katrina's unfolding drama.

—Susan Fisher Miller





Watching the weather channel and trusting God: A young New Orleanian shares her hurricane log

By Alejandra Urbizo

It began with a weather report. A tropical depression was forming in the Atlantic Ocean; meteorologists would be “keeping a close eye” on it.

Normal news for us and the rest of the Gulf Coast: everyone here knows that late August/early September is peak season for hurricanes. We know that the waters are warm during that time and that the weather is perfect for tropical waves to form, intensify into hurricanes, and strike land. We had been through this drill every year during hurricane season; still, I prayed that no tropical storm would hit us. We all stated that nothing would happen, but there was also fear: maybe this storm would be The One.

The week before Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans on Monday, August 29, all I was worrying about was working the extra hours that I needed at my own job to cover leaving early on Wednesday, to fill in for my mom at her daycare while she, my father, and aunt and uncle left for New York to visit my sister. The coming weekend was going to be great: I would have the house all to myself, hang out with my friends at church, and watch movies all day.

On Friday, August 26, 2005, I arrived to work early and checked the Weather Channel webpage to see the status of the storm. I noticed that Florida was hit again with a Category 1 storm named Katrina, and that the meteorologists stated that this storm would enter the Gulf. Throughout the day I kept checking the status of the storm; the projection path changed so much that we weren’t sure where its actual strike zone might be. By the end of the day, New Orleans was in the middle of the strike zone.

Friday night I went to youth group at church. Panic began to set in once I got home. First, it was a call from my cousin. Since we were both home alone, we were reminding each other what preparations needed to be made, just in case this storm really did come. My parents checked in and expressed anxiety too. We decided that I would leave New Orleans with my cousins.

Saturday I began prepping the house for the storm; a friend arrived to help move things around, including relocating everything from the top of dressers into closets. Then I started looking for important documents, booking hotel rooms, and packing for the trip out of town.

I had no idea that this day would be so stressful. I was by myself, and I had so much responsibility. I wanted to make sure I did not forget anything or mess something up. I was so nervous by Saturday night that I ended up locking my car keys, my house keys, and our important documents in my car at church. I held up our evacuation tracking down spare keys.

We finally left New Orleans at 1 a.m. Sunday morning, August 28. It took us about nine hours to get to Houston, Texas, our destination. Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco had ordered “contraflow” traffic on highways out of the city, which reversed traffic on inbound interstate lanes. Until we got pointed in the right direction, we were mistakenly heading toward Mississippi instead of Texas.

That night none of us slept, except for the dog and the cat in the car with us. We tuned the radio to station WWL 870 AM and heard people calling in, telling the listeners the best routes to avoid the traffic, the status of the storm, and stories of the people evacuating. Once light broke Sunday morning, my cousin and I started calling our friends from church and work. We were worried, because we knew that some of them were still in New Orleans.

Once we arrived at our hotel, we wanted to relax—but how can you relax when, in the pit of your stomach, you know that something is about to happen? All day we were calling different people or text messaging them, trying to convince them to leave New Orleans because the storm was strong and fierce. I was glad that a big group decided to leave New Orleans no matter how long it would take them. We all prayed to God for patience and for his will to be done.

It was one of the longest nights in my life, and the beginning of one of the longest weeks of my life. We barely slept. We had the TV tuned to any channel that would give us updates of the storm. The next day, Monday, August 29, we saw the latest news of the hurricane while packing to leave the hotel; the management would only let us have the room for one night. Later that day, we moved to our friends’ house, where we would stay for a week.

Living through the days of the hurricane was one thing, but the aftermath was another experience. The images we saw on the TV, the seemingly endless waiting, and the unselfish and heartwarming help that we received were all deeply-felt

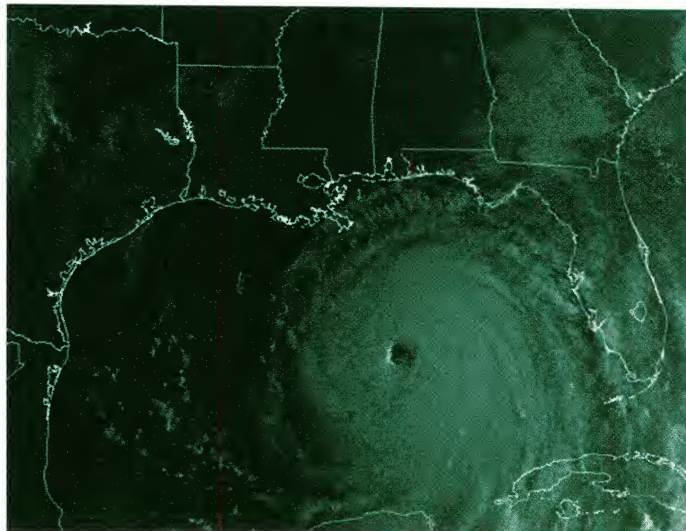


Image of Katrina as a category 5 hurricane on August 28th, 7:19 a.m. Source: NOAA National Weather Service

experiences after the storm. God was always with us and fulfilling his plans.

We waited for the opportunity to return to New Orleans and see what the storm had left. My parents and I got our chance a week and a day after the storm hit. Driving into New Orleans was nerve-wracking. We drove in around 2:30 a.m., breaking the curfew; I realized I was gripping the car’s door handle very tightly. When we arrived at our house, the first thing my dad did was to kneel and pray to God. Then we waited in our dark house until the sun rose. It was a long wait, because it was really dark, and so quiet you could hear the grasshoppers chirping.


When the sunlight appeared, we began to assess the damage to our home. There was obvious damage, like the big holes in the ceiling of our living room. The dining room was also in bad condition. At 7 a.m. we began cleaning up the debris around our house. Siding had blown all over our back and front yards and our neighbor’s front yard. The back yard was also filled with shingles from our neighbors’ houses. The most interesting thing was that part of a pine tree from four houses away had landed in our front yard.

Everything was unexplainable: the piece of siding, for instance, that had somehow landed under my father’s van, and ripped one of the front tires. We even had beans germinating on top of our dining table. We threw away the carpet in the living room and dining room, as well as the dining table and anything that was on the floor that had mold on it. My parents cleaned out the refrigerator; I was too nauseous. While we were cleaning up, a convoy of military trucks passed by to give us water, ice, Meals Ready to Eat, and even trash bags. Every 10 minutes we could hear relief helicopters flying over us.



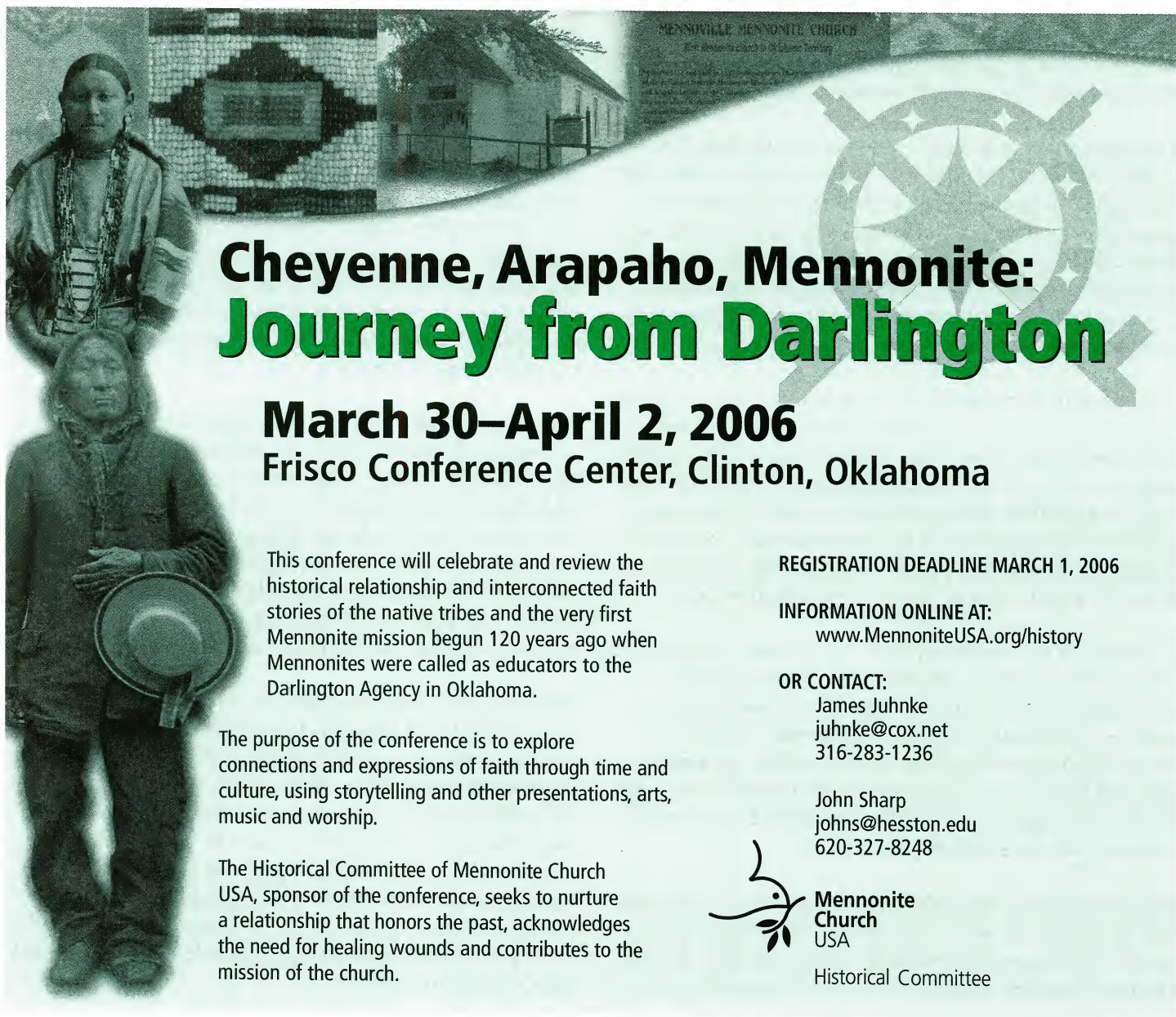
At this point we are back in our home, and my job has come back to its building in downtown New Orleans. Everybody in the Gulf Coast area lived through something different. Everybody has their own evacuation story, Red Cross story, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) story, and cleanup story—at least, those who had a house left to clean up. Sometimes, having lived through the event, it is hard to know how to help others understand what it was like.

Everyone has been looking for an answer as to why this city and its residents had to experience Hurricane Katrina, but sometimes there is no clear answer. We must not play the blame game. All we can do, first and foremost, is trust God,

and second, pick up the pieces and move on. If we trust God with all that we have in us, we will know that the city can be better. 



Alejandra Urbizo, 25, resides in New Orleans where she is employed by Pan-American Life Insurance Company. She describes herself as a "hopeless romantic" who studied finance in college and dreams of embarking on a mission trip. Alejandra attends Iglesia Amor Viviente in Metairie, Louisiana, a congregation of the Gulf States Mennonite Conference.



Cheyenne, Arapaho, Mennonite: Journey from Darlington

March 30–April 2, 2006 Frisco Conference Center, Clinton, Oklahoma

This conference will celebrate and review the historical relationship and interconnected faith stories of the native tribes and the very first Mennonite mission begun 120 years ago when Mennonites were called as educators to the Darlington Agency in Oklahoma.

The purpose of the conference is to explore connections and expressions of faith through time and culture, using storytelling and other presentations, arts, music and worship.


The Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA, sponsor of the conference, seeks to nurture a relationship that honors the past, acknowledges the need for healing wounds and contributes to the mission of the church.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE MARCH 1, 2006

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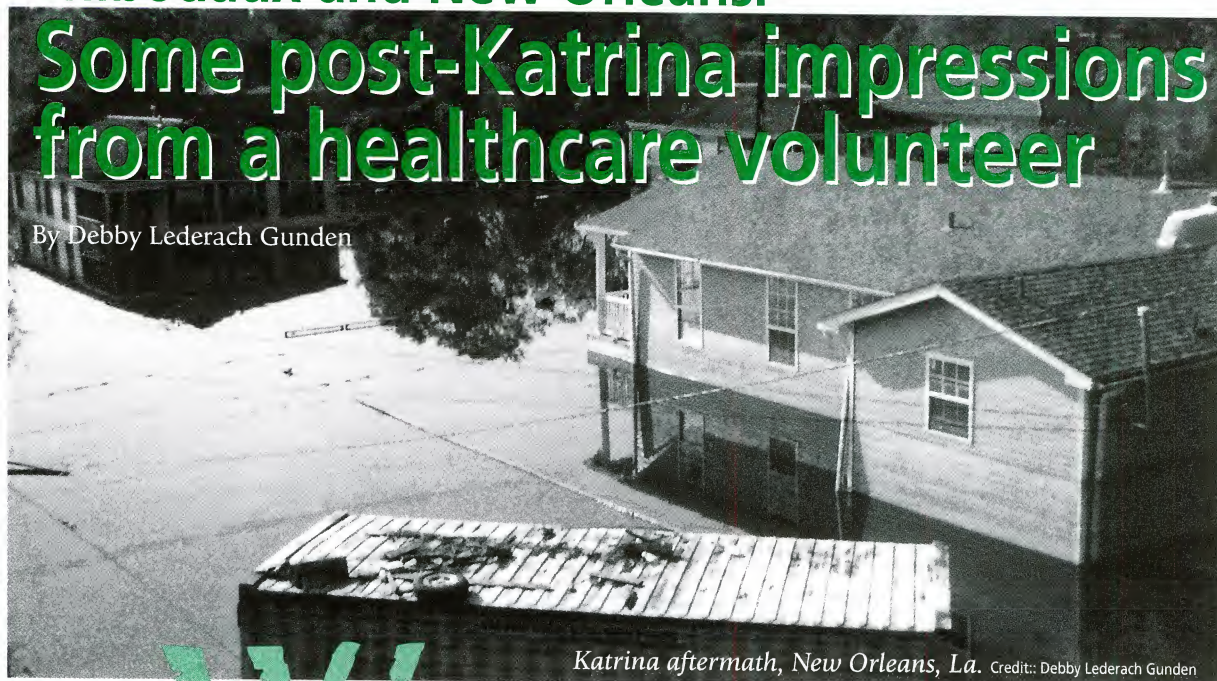


**Mennonite
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Historical Committee

Thibodaux and New Orleans: Some post-Katrina impressions from a healthcare volunteer

By Debby Lederach Gunden



Katrina aftermath, New Orleans, La. Credit: Debby Lederach Gunden

Why I went to Louisiana

The past year has been difficult: so many tragic events unfolding across the world, beginning with the Asian tsunami. Pictures of the tsunami disaster were overwhelming, and like most observers I experienced a strong desire to reach out and help tsunami victims. But the logistics, language, and culture of a far-off location made it impossible for me to consider. Sending money was the only way I could help.

When Hurricane Katrina hit the southern United States on August 29, 2005, I realized that going to the Gulf Coast to help as a nurse practitioner was something I *could* do. I immediately got online and registered with the Red Cross and other national organizations. My family supported my decision, and my employer offered two weeks' paid leave to any employee wishing to travel to Louisiana.

Due to the overwhelming response by healthcare workers across the country, the applications were too numerous for all to be processed, and I assumed that I would not get the opportunity to go. Somehow via the Internet, though, my name linked up with the Hope Crisis Response Network, an organization based in Elkhart, Indiana. Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels had asked this organization to send medical teams to Louisiana.

I was called on a Thursday night in early September and asked if I could leave on Sunday. Forty-three nurses and doctors from all over Indiana left Indianapolis and arrived in Alexandria, Louisiana. We were then bussed to Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, Louisiana. Nicholls State University's two gymnasiums had been turned into shelters, and its nursing school building into a special needs shelter. Most of the shelters' evacuees were from New Orleans. Many had spent the first few days after the hurricane in the Superdome, the Convention Center, on roofs, or on the bypasses.

Many other evacuees had been released from hospitals, too ill or weak to care for themselves. They were recovering from problems such as severe sunburn, pneumonia, skin infections and dehydration. There were many people with diabetes or high blood pressure who had lost their medication and needed assistance getting their disease back under control. There were psychiatric patients who were off their medications and not stable enough to join the general population. The medical team was assigned to run a first-aid center in the general shelters. The nursing team, for our part, worked mainly in a special needs shelter, providing care to those unable to care for themselves.

The special needs shelter

We were told that the first few days after the disaster there were close to 300 people in the special needs shelter. When we arrived the census was around 100 people. We provided basic nursing care without the help of modern conveniences. We improvised as we went, using what we had to try to provide quality care. There were a few hospital beds, but most people were sleeping on Army cots. We made nurses' stations out of desks.

As the week progressed, our group was able to set systems in place that made life in the shelter feel less hectic and less uncertain. Then our group had more time to sit and visit with the people and do little things that brought comfort, or simply a sense of calm, to people who had lost everything and did not know where they were going next. As I look back, I remember the feel of the place when I arrived: chaotic. The day I left, it felt calm and it felt safe. I think that a greater sense of calm was the gift my group gave to these evacuees—but only for a few days. The next week, we learned, everyone at this shelter was uprooted again, evacuated to Alexandria; Hurricane Rita was coming.

The general shelter

I spent one day working in the general shelter. Two gymnasiums held approximately 1,000 people. Our job was to dispense basic over-the-counter medication, provide basic first aid, and keep tabs on any potential communicable disease outbreak such as diarrhea. Families in the general shelter had been there approximately two weeks. Family units were allotted about 20 square feet, a territory defined by their mattresses. There was no privacy, there was loud noise, and there was a feeling of underlying tension in the gymnasiums. There was a constant National Guard presence, and there was a sense that without it, things could get out of control. The National Guard was not allowed to show force, but this decision was being re-evaluated while I was in Louisiana. The stress of living in a gym under these circumstances was taking its toll on residents. By this stage, most people who had the means and a destination had left. Those left behind did not know where they were going. They were simply waiting for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to tell them.

The people

The people at the Thibodaux shelter were some of America's poorest. We were still getting new admissions coming out of New Orleans to the special needs shelter. I met people who knew only their name—not their birth date, street address, or the name of a relative or friend to contact. Invisible people: if they had perished, where were the people who would have missed them? I met people who had a look of panic on their faces. They knew that they had no options and were at the mercy of the kindness of strangers. Many of these people will get lost in bureaucracy. They had no voice before; now, their sheer numbers will make the chance of a long-term positive outcome improbable. Where do you put displaced people such as these, and, more importantly, who will take responsibility for them in the long term? Short-term crisis care is easy by comparison.

New Orleans

On September 11, my colleagues and I found ourselves on a foray into New Orleans before it was open to the public. The experience was surreal.



Inside one of the Thibodaux gymnasium shelters. Credit: Debby Lederach Gunden



Damage in Slidell, La., located beside Lake Pontchartrain. Credit: Debby Lederach Gunden

Imagine a bleak science fiction movie: that is the only way to describe what I saw. To see an American city in this state was chilling, a reminder of how tenuous our way of life really is. There was no traffic on the roads, no people in the streets or shopping centers, only empty buildings; everything was still. There were stranded cars on the side of the road. There were boats on dry ground where at one time there had been water. Refuse was still present on overpasses. Houses were still flooded. There were marks on houses indicating whether utility representatives had turned off the gas and water, or whether any bodies had been found inside. The only activity was in the Canal Street vicinity, carried out by National Guardsmen, construction workers, and television crews. An interesting sight was a yellow tent, set up on the highway and surrounded

by rescue crews. The tent housed a recently rescued individual being hosed down, as if exposed to a hazardous waste spill: preparation for entering the general population of a shelter.

Some observations

Two things became painfully obvious while working in a crisis environment. Bureaucracy becomes ineffective and cumbersome in this environment. Large government organizations move slowly, and, at times, inappropriately. Policies and procedures have their place, but once they prove to be an obstacle to the overall good, they need to be discarded. Unfortunately, many in the positions of power cannot work outside the bureaucratic framework, and they themselves become a roadblock to effective intervention.


Communication was a major problem. Thibodeaux had been spared the wrath of Katrina, and Nicholls University was up and running, but the shelters themselves were a world apart. We volunteers did not have access to computers or phone systems; we relied on walkie talkies to communicate or, in most cases, used the lower-tech method of walking a bit to speak to one another face to face. The emphasis for disaster planning and management has to be

focused on the very basics, and on the realization that our sophisticated forms of communications cannot be depended on.

Concluding thoughts

It is very easy to sit back and be cynical and critical of our government's response to this major disaster. There is enough blame to go around. But when you see the actual enormity of this disaster, beyond the television screen, it is easier to see why there were delays and obstacles to overcome. For now, shelter, food, healthcare, and other basic necessities have been provided. Will the long-term solutions work? With plans in motion and resources available, long-term success will depend on the will of all of us.

What about my contribution? The impact of one person is negligible. At best, I provided a small amount of comfort for a small amount of time to a handful of people. But if you multiply me by the thousands, multiply that by days, weeks and months, then there can be a force that brings help and hope for those who lost everything.

Since Hurricane Katrina there has been the tragedy of the Pakistan earthquake. I have a difficult time watching this tragedy unfold. I see in the eyes of Pakistani earthquake victims the same look of hopelessness and loss that I saw in the faces of those I met from New Orleans. But Pakistan's situation presents an even greater challenge: less wealth, a less stable government, fewer citizens who can share from their abundance. I turn off my television, uncomfortable. How will hope enter this picture? 



Debby Lederach Gunden has been a nurse practitioner for seven years, working primarily with low income, underinsured and uninsured patients in Goshen, Indiana.



Haz-Mat tent outside special needs shelter, Thibodeaux, La. Credit: Debby Lederach Gunden

*Call and response
signs in Pearl River,
Louisiana.*

Photo courtesy Bill Miller



Mennonite Disaster Service workers find faith and optimism in the midst of destruction

By Bill Miller

Following the arrival of disastrous Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005, a number of us at College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Indiana began to think about what we might do to help those in need. We knew that in the long run the bi-national office of Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) would set up a number of units in the Gulf Coast area, but that would take some time. Mennonite Disaster Service is not a relief agency, but responds to the long-term needs of people following a disaster. That work takes time and careful planning.

We wanted to respond to Katrina quickly, but we were wary of being inadequately connected to the local situation. We had heard accounts of individuals and groups who hastily went south with workers and supplies, only to find that without good contacts, a quick response and good intentions can lead to disappointing results.

In the case of our group, an appeal came directly from a local Louisiana resident. Ron Guth, an attorney in Slidell, Louisiana and the city attorney for nearby Pearl River, attends College Mennonite Church when he is in the northern Indiana area. Knowing that MDS is an important part of our congregation's mission, he asked us for help. Pearl River and its neighbor St. Joe are small communities, the kind that are likely to be overlooked by the larger organizations.

Within a relatively short time we had a northern Indiana group ready to go: three volunteers from College Mennonite Church, three from First Mennonite Church in Middlebury, and two from Forks Mennonite Church, also in Middlebury. We went as a local MDS group, leaving for Louisiana on September 18. We were a varied group of teachers, maintenance workers, an insurance agent, a pastor, and a couple builders. Most were retired or semi-retired. Our caravan on the road consisted of two pickup trucks, one pulling a travel trailer and the other pulling a utility trailer filled with food and other supplies donated by members of the churches. The 18-hour trip gave us time to get well acquainted. There was much chatter and story telling.

Shortly after we crossed the Mississippi state line, we began to see storm damage which increased as we went south. We passed convoys of power company vehicles,

mostly headed back north. There were also mile-long convoys of military vehicles with supply trucks and land moving equipment. We had been told that some grocery stores and restaurants were reopening, but were advised to fill our vehicle gas tanks and the gas cans for our chain saws before we got into the heavily hit area.

Our situation in Louisiana would be quite different from a typical MDS operation. Usually, once MDS is set up in a location, there is an on-site director responsible for housing, food service, work assignments and long-range planning. In our case, by contrast, we were entirely on our own. Ron Guth had arranged for us to set up at the Salvation Baptist Church in St. Joe. Some of us could sleep in the trailer, the others in the church. We even took cooking utensils along, not knowing what the church might have. We did have the names of two contact persons, Thomas Jefferson (T.J.) Smith, a deacon in the Salvation Baptist Church, and Jimmy Lavegne, the mayor of Pearl River. But largely we were making a journey into the unknown.



Members of the MDS team meet their Pearl River, Louisiana hosts (from left): Mayor Jimmy Lavegne, Salvation Baptist Church deacon T.J. Smith, Bill Miller, Alan Horst. Photo courtesy Roy Hartzler

Late Monday morning we pulled in at Salvation Baptist Church, where we were warmly greeted by Deacon T.J. Smith. It was the beginning of a week-long series of warm greetings and relationships with members of the church and community. Salvation Baptist Church is a small,

African-American congregation in St. Joe. In spite of its small size, it is thriving and dynamic. After unloading the supplies, setting up the travel trailer, and piecing together a lunch, we were ready for work.

Our first assignment was to clear a driveway across the road from the church where the storm had knocked down and tossed about 60-foot yellow pine trees as if they were toothpicks. In our enthusiasm, we ignored the 96 degree temperature and high humidity, until our clothing was soaked and our knees began to get weak. Drink, drink, drink: our thirst seemed unending. We soon learned to pace ourselves and, with the midday heat index at 108 degrees, to take a noon break.

St. Joe resident Eric, the church neighbor whose driveway we cleared, was most grateful for the help. As we took an extended water break, he told us about the storm. Knowing that his house was vulnerable, he, along with others in the neighborhood, gathered in the Salvation Baptist Church building, a sturdy brick structure. He filled the baptistery with water for washing and for flushing the toilets in case the city water supply failed. There they stayed to ride out the storm, watching as the trees were downed and tossed about. We asked if he had been scared. He responded, "No, it was in God's hands. Whether there are good or bad times, we trust in the Lord!" After the storm the roads were completely blocked. No traffic could move. People brought what food and other supplies they had to the church where they were shared with those in need. The community was brought together in a common cause. What a testimony!

Deacon T.J. Smith of the Salvation Baptist Church is an amazing person. He has a degree in business administration and worked for the Ford Motor Company Credit Company for



From left, foreground: Roy Hartzler and author Bill Miller wield chain saws with a team member in St. Joe, Louisiana. Photo courtesy Bill Miller

20 years. Still a fairly young man, he is semi-retired and runs a non-emergency medical transport service. Additionally, he is active as a volunteer in the church and community. Salvation Baptist is a small church with a large vision. Under the leadership of T.J. and others in the community, and taking seriously President Bush's support of "faith based initiatives," the congregation has built a \$5 million, 100-unit senior housing complex, financing it with federal grants and tax credits. It is an impressive accomplishment for a small church and community.

Everyone we met seemed to know and love our host, Pear River city attorney Ron Guth, from the mayor of Pearl River to the poor of the community. Ron has special rapport with the people at Salvation Baptist. He met T.J. Smith years ago, when Smith was a young lad on a picket line with his father, Thomas Jefferson Smith, Sr., protesting discriminatory hiring practices in the city.

T.J. has spent time with Ron in Honeyville, Indiana, where Ron's wife, Caryl, has an antique shop. T.J. commented that it was nice to see that the Amish in northern Indiana can live life at a slower pace without all the modern conveniences. Through the Guths, T.J. has learned a lot about Mennonites. Ron has provided him with a subscription to the *Mennonite Weekly Review*, which T.J. uses regularly as he

prepares his Sunday school lesson. We talked about the commonalities of the Baptists and Menonites during some of our evening bull sessions.

Throughout the week our work was mostly cleanup of downed trees and branches. Some of us ran chainsaws, others dragged and stacked the brush along the road to be picked up or put on piles to be burned. The amount of rubble to be disposed of after this hurricane is mind boggling. Many trees were still on rooftops. Removing those trees took special care, to avoid further damage to the roof. A few roofs were temporarily repaired, covered with tarps to avoid further water damage.

T.J. and Ron directed us to the homes where we were most urgently needed. These involved people at the low end of the economic scale, those without insurance, and those unable to do the work themselves. One day we worked for the city of Pearl River. Pearl River Mayor Jimmy Lavegne was most grateful and treated us to lunch at the Wishbone restaurant. He offered us free ice and diesel fuel. Later, Mayor Lavegne commented to Ron, "These are old men, but boy can they work!" (Our ages ranged from 64 to 72.)

Most of our work was in areas where there was extensive storm damage, but no flooding. One day, however, we worked in Slidell, where the storm

surge had pushed water to heights of six to eight feet. Ron Guth's law office in Slidell had about five feet of water in it. He lost most of his legal records and files.

On Thursday we worked for Ivory, a single woman probably in her 40s. Her house had been flooded with about six feet of water, and the inhabitants, before their rescue by boat, had poked a bedrail through the roof in an effort to climb above the rising flood waters. Many of Ivory's things remained in the house, still soaking wet.

The work in Ivory's home was the most difficult job we did all week. The stench was terrible. Mold was beginning to take over. Ivory had salvaged some of her things. Our job was to clean out the rest. A few things were still salvageable, but many things were carried to the street for pickup and transport to the landfill. Ivory made the difficult decisions. It was a depressing job for her as well as for us. Yet in spite of all she had lost, there was still a spirit of optimism. At one point as I walked by Ivory with an armload of her soggy belongings, I heard her encourage someone else through the telephone, "You gonna make it. Hang in there baby. You gonna make it!"

On Thursday afternoon Ron took us on a "field trip" to see some of the other areas of destruction. Much of what we had seen prior to this involved low- and

middle-income neighborhoods. As we drove through Slidell and approached the shore of Lake Pontchartrain, however, the trees stopped, and we drove out through the areas where housing had been built on wetlands that had been drained and filled in. Here the housing consisted of expensive houses and condominiums. Many of the brick buildings survived the wind, but were devastated by the storm surge. Block after block, mile after mile, we saw lawns stacked with relatively new furniture, appliances, doors and frames, soggy drywall and insulation, everything that had been soaked by the flood water. The shells of these houses can probably be saved.

But near the edge of Lake Pontchartrain, where multi-million dollar houses lined the shore, there was nearly complete destruction. Not even much rubble remained. It had all been blown into the channels! One could only wonder why anyone would build houses where they are so vulnerable to hurricanes. Furthermore, why would zoning boards and local governments allow wetlands to be drained and channels dug to provide housing for millionaires, knowing that elimination of the wetlands makes everyone in the area more vulnerable to storms? Would the money not better have been spent to build up the wetlands and make sure that the dikes and levees are strong enough to protect the vulnerable houses already built below sea level in the city?

Hurricane Katrina has raised many questions that should be answered before these areas are simply rebuilt with insurance or even government funds. Who is addressing these questions? I came away from our tour of the area near Lake Pontchartrain with very mixed feelings. Where are our

The damaged Slidell, Louisiana law office of attorney Ron Guth following Katrina's flood surge. Photo courtesy Bill Miller



priorities?

On the other hand, a lot of positive things were happening in the communities we observed. A local Nazarene church serves as a huge distribution center for persons needing clothing, bedding and other supplies. A local Lutheran church distributes supplies sent down by a sister church up north: gloves, masks, bar oil for our

saws, medical supplies. The Red Cross is distributing hot meals and other supplies to those in need. The “needy” even included people like us at work sites. T.J. reported that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Guard did a good job in their early response to the destruction around his area. There was no loss of life and no looting. T.J. commented, “The storm brought

people together. Isn’t it amazing what God can do!”

Our group of eight northern Indiana “old men” may have only made a small dent in the massive job of cleanup. Nevertheless, for those we helped, it was a real boost. They know now that some folks up north do indeed care about their situation. 🙏

The MDS team poses pre-dawn at College Mennonite Church parking lot before embarking for Louisiana (from left): Glen Weaver, Roy Hartzler, Ed Laber, Gordon Kauffman, Alan Horst, Bill Miller, Ted Eash, Cletus Miller.

Photo courtesy Bill Miller



Bill Miller served as a teacher and administrator at Goshen College (Indiana) for 33 years. Both during his career and in retirement he has worked as a volunteer for a variety of organizations in the USA and abroad. He is vice-chairman of the Indiana and Lower Michigan Unit, Region II, of Mennonite Disaster Service.

POSITION: Director, Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee

POSITION DESCRIPTION:

The Director will provide overall coordination and direction to the heritage and history work of the Historical Committee, and develop program and vision that will enhance the life and spirit of Mennonite Church USA. The Director will oversee the work of the archives in Goshen, IN and in Newton, KS. The Director is responsible to the Historical Committee and ultimately to the Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA. The position is full time. The director should be located on site at the Goshen or possibly Newton archives.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- A. Have an appreciation for and knowledge of Anabaptist-Mennonite history and faith.
- B. Possess and be able to verbalize faith commitments easily and genuinely.
- C. Meet people easily—have the common touch—have self-confidence and social skills.
- D. Possess good administrative skills.
- E. Speak well, persuasively, creatively. Be a teacher.
- F. Have strong, popular writing skills.
- G. Be able to take initiative and shape a vision.
- H. Have strong organization skills. Transform vision into action.
- I. Be an active member of a Mennonite Church USA congregation.
- J. Be open to all ethnic groups, genders, and ages.
- K. Be willing to travel as needed on a Mennonite-Your-Way basis.
- L. Have earned a Master's degree in history or theology and/or possess equivalent work experience.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

A. Storytelling

1. The Director will serve as an enthusiastic networker, connector, enabler of people and programs related to Mennonite Church heritage and history.

2. The Director will discover or invent ways and means to bring the heritage, history, and stories of the people of God named Mennonite to all the peoples of the church. In many instances this will mean assisting and encouraging activities already under way.
3. The programs and activities will be primarily directed to conferences and congregations, communities, and local Mennonite historical societies rather than to scholarly groups in the church.
4. The Director will find ways to be of special assistance to new Mennonites and Mennonites of other than Swiss/German/Russian background.
5. The Director will write news releases and produce other appropriate publicity as need and opportunity dictate.

B. Administration/Oversight and Accountability

1. The Director will provide administrative leadership to the Archivists, Assistant Archivists, archival and office assistants and the overall archival program in Goshen and Newton.
2. The Director, in consultation with the Chair of the Historical Committee, will prepare agenda for the Committee bi-annual meetings, arrange logistics, and facilitate the work of the Committee sessions.
3. The Director will discuss archives matters monthly with the Archivists in both locations. Budget, personnel, facilities, services, and policies will be dealt with on a regular basis.
4. The Director will edit or will consult with and oversee the work of the editor of the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*.
5. The Director will manage or will oversee the management of the MHC web site.
6. The Director will confer with the Chair of the Committee frequently to brief the Chair on work at hand and to handle issues on a timely basis.
7. The Director will confer with the Associate Executive Director of the Executive Leadership Team on a quarterly basis, as administrative issues arise.

8. The Director will attend Executive Board meetings in order to remain aware of main lines of church policy and direction.

C. Finances and Fundraising

1. The Director will prepare the annual budget for presentation to the Historical Committee each spring, which, upon Committee action, will be presented to the associate executive director of the Executive Leadership Team for final approval. A detailed report on expenditures will be presented by the Director to the Historical Committee each fall meeting of the Committee.
2. The Director will pursue increasing the membership base of the Mennonite Church USA Historical Association and engage in fundraising activities as is necessary for balancing the budget.
3. The Director will write grant proposals or oversee writing of grant proposals and raise money for specific projects as the need and opportunity arise.
4. The Director will work with the Archivists to oversee and manage collection of agency fees and digitizing of the collections.
5. The Director will develop and oversee a capital campaign, as needed.

POSITION LEVEL AND SALARY BASE:

Level VII- Director position in MC USA organizational structure. Application review will begin February 1, 2006, and continue until the position is filled.

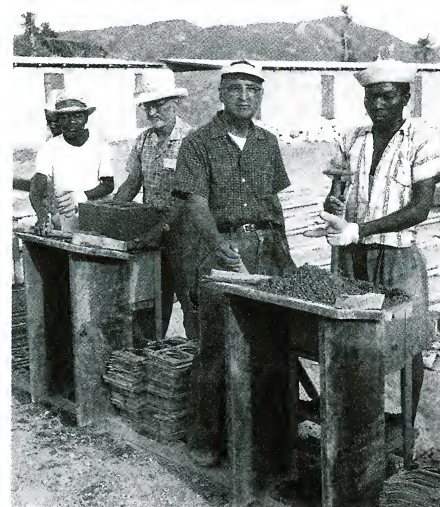
Send resumé and references to:
Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee and Archives
 1700 S. Main Street
 Goshen, Indiana 46526

Scrapbook page, Goshen

By Dennis Stoesz, Archivist



Left: Civilian Public Service (CPS) men and U.S. Army troops filling up sand bags to save Council Bluffs, Iowa from the Missouri River flood, April 1943. In background are the sand bags to protect the pumping station, the sole source of water for the city of 40,000 residents. By way of thanks, the city engineer Jack Boyne offered them to see a show at the theatre, then cigarettes, then beer: all refused by the CPS men who then asked for two new aprons and four dish towels for the cooks at CPS Camp Denison, Iowa, items which were then promptly provided. Source: Mennonite Central Committee Photograph Collection.



Upper right: Marvin Landis and Phares D. Martin with local Haitian workers make cement blocks to build 10 houses, with 12 rooms in each, in Côtés de Fer, Haiti, December 1963, after Hurricane Flora struck that country. Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) responded to 12 international situations hit by earthquakes and tornados between 1956-95: Puerto Rico (1956 Hurricane Betsy), British Honduras (1961 Hurricane Hattie), Yugoslavia (1963 earthquake), Haiti (1963 Hurricane Flora), Turkey (1966 earthquake), Nicaragua (1972 earthquake), Honduras (1974 Hurricane Fifi), Guatemala (1977 earthquake), Nicaragua (1988 Hurricane Joan), Armenia (1989 earthquake), Costa Rica (1991 earthquake), and Japan (1995 earthquake).

Sources: *The Hammer Rings Hope*, by Lowell Detweiler, 2000, page 51, 176, and Mennonite Central Committee Photograph Collection, photographer Arlin Hunsberger.

Right: Clem Isabelle sits in her back yard amid ruined belongings after Hurricane Camille came through Gulfport, Mississippi, August 17, 1969. The death toll reached 135 in Mississippi. Mennonite Disaster Service provided 1,800 volunteers over a seven month period, August 20, 1969 through to March 15, 1970, for 11,000 hours. This was the ninth largest disaster service project of MDS in their fifty year history, 1950-1999.

Sources: *The Hammer Rings Hope*, by Lowell Detweiler, 2000, page 46, 179, and Mennonite Central Committee Photograph Collection, photographer Burton Buller.

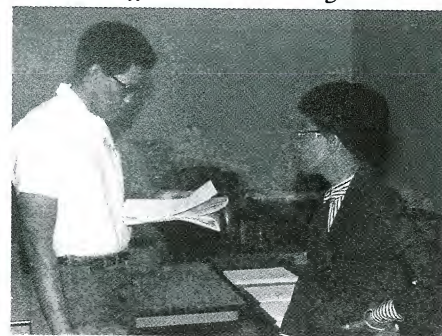


Robert Garcia (left) and Chester Slagell replace rafters, sheathing and roofing which disappeared when Hurricane Celia hit Garcia's home, Corpus Christi, Texas, October 1970. Garcia also expressed his appreciation for the help by doing some mechanical work, free of charge, on the local pastor's car. The local Mennonite churches were the Prince of Peace Iglesia Mennonita in Corpus Christi, and the Calvary Mennonite Church in Mathis, both which also suffered some damage in the hurricane.

Source: Mennonite Central Committee Photograph Collection.

Right: Clyde Jackson, Executive Director of the United Black Front, planning a day's activity with Sybil Gilcrest, Executive Secretary, at its headquarters in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, July 1969. This was a project of Pittsburgh Mennonite Church and MDS, with the Dr. Evan Riehl family as the team coordinators.

Source: Mennonite Central Committee Photograph Collection, photographer Tim Burkholder.



Scrapbook page, North Newton

By John D. Thiesen, Archivist



A Mennonite Disaster Service group pauses in front of the agency's bus while working the Newton, Kansas flood in June 1965. © Bethel College



Bethel College students help dismantle a Baptist church destroyed by Hurricane Camille in Gulfport, Mississippi, January 1970.

Source: Bethel College News Service, 1987. © Bethel College

Below: Mennonite Disaster Service volunteers work in twisted debris after the famous Udall, Kansas tornado of May 25, 1955. © Bethel College



Mennonite Disaster Service yard cleanup after a the 1951 Florence, Kansas flood; (left to right) Amanda Janz Rogalsky, Herman Rogalsky, Maria Regier Kim.

Source: Menno Schrag. © Bethel College



Mennonite Disaster Service workers from central Kansas pose before a house project in Judsonia, Arkansas, May 1952: (left to right) A.M. Lohrentz, J.R. Lohrentz, E.L. Regier, J.L. Regier.

Source: A. M. Lohrentz. © Bethel College



Telling the whole of our history

History, in all of its shapes and sizes, connects us as a church in unusual ways. Last spring I was fortunate to be able to visit some of the important Anabaptist sites in Europe. I stood along the Linge River in Asperen, Holland where Dirk Willems was executed after he had earlier saved the life of his pursuer. In Zurich, Switzerland where Felix Manz was drowned, I returned to the Limmat River and read the story on the commemorative plaque that had been placed on the river wall a year earlier. In the far northern German city of Bad Oldesloe, I visited the house where Menno Simons worked during his final years and saw the memorial stones placed in the garden by Mennonite groups from all over the world. After traveling a few hours west to the city of Münster, I saw the cages hanging in the St. Lamberti Cathedral tower in which the corpses of Anabaptists were displayed as a warning to other would-be apocalyptic visionaries.

Next spring I will attend the "Journey from Darlington" conference in Clinton, Oklahoma (see the notice on page 6) which will explore the history of contact between Mennonites and Native Americans. The speakers, tours, and practical demonstrations at that conference will tell us a different history in which the tables have turned. Depending on who is telling the story, Mennonites in this part of our history played the role of helper, evangelizer, or perhaps the well-intentioned oppressor.



Visit our web site at www.MennoniteUSA.org/history

Mennonite Historical Bulletin

Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee
1700 South Main Street
Goshen, IN 46526-4794

Address Service Requested

Regardless of how one interprets their actions, these mission-minded Mennonites reached out to people they felt needed help.

As I write these words, I am aware of Mennonites who are working to rebuild areas of the southern United States that have been devastated by hurricanes. Our history of service continues to lead us into places we otherwise would not be. These acts not only help the people who have lost so much but they also change us by taking us out of our comfortable communities and bringing us face to face with calamity and suffering. These experiences often force us to question our assumptions and easy answers by placing us in circumstances that test our ideas of how life should be lived.

Our history is full of stories that tell us who we are. The heroes of the Reformation stand as examples of faith and obedience while the misguided actions of the Münster radicals are sober reminders of faith gone awry. The good stories make us aware of the things we do well while the stories of wrongdoing and mistakes remind us of our fallibility and humanity. We need to hear both, because all of them are our stories.

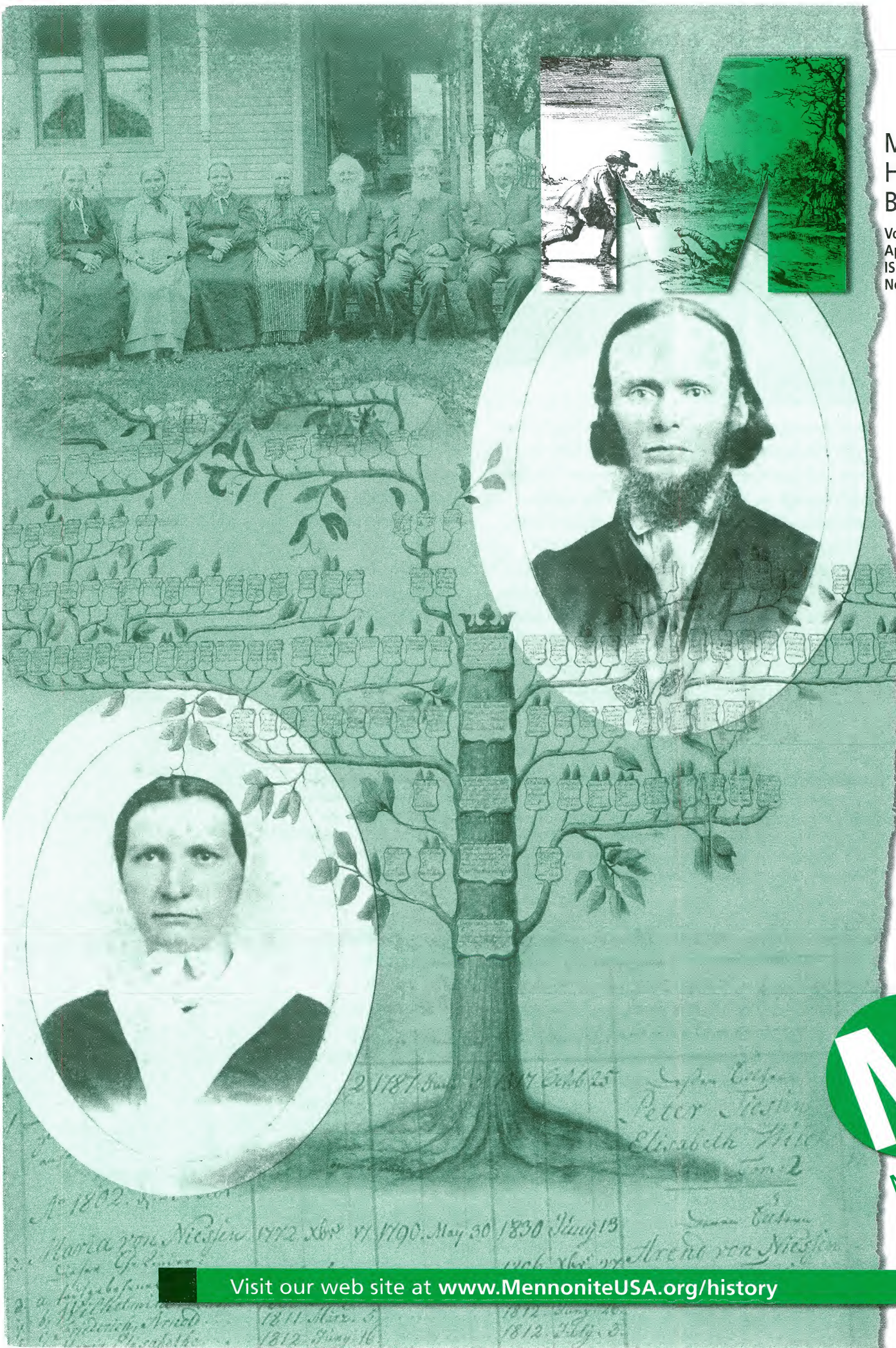
—Franklin Yoder



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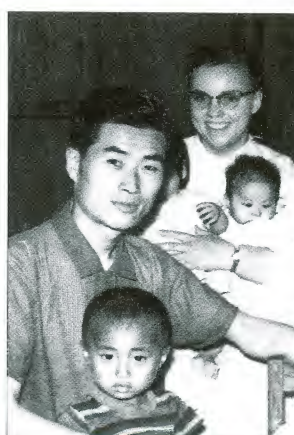
In this issue



Page 4: In an interview by her daughter Kara, genealogist Betty Hartzler reflects on her work of over three decades. Genealogy reveals patterns in family and church life, cycles of relaxing and rediscovering core values, and even the persistence, over ten generations, of her Swiss Mennonite family's appetite for good cheese.



Page 7: Sarah Kehrberg braves the fascinating frontier in genealogical research of genetic testing, where a scraping of cheek cells, evaluated in the genetics lab, can clinch a common ancestor or disabuse our notions of exotic bloodlines. Kehrberg profiles a Longenecker surname project (would you have guessed *Sweden* figures in?) and sheds light along the way onto the mysteries of DNA.



Page 14: A scrapbook page sent by Dennis Stoesz of the Goshen Archives surveys a wealth of Mennonite family history—from conventional generational succession to the creative expansion of family via adoption, exchanged friendship, or collaborative mission.



Page 15: John D. Thiesen of the Mennonite Library and Archives at North Newton shows us family tracking tools, ancient and modern: longhand record books salvaged from past centuries, and a genealogical record-keeper of our brave new world—a CD-ROM database dubbed GRANDMA.

Oval photographs on the cover: John Smiley, 1822-1879, born in Somerset County, Pennsylvania married Mary Conrad, 1825-1912, born in Smithville, Ohio, in 1846. John Smiley's grandfather was Irish, and his grandmother was an Englishwoman who had immigrated to Pennsylvania with her four year old son, Nathan. Reared in the home of John Troyer, Nathan Smiley married Anna Miller and had two sons, John and Samuel. Mary Conrad's father had emigrated to Ohio from Alsace, France, and her mother, from Wayne County, Ohio, had roots in Mifflin County, Pennsylvania. Source: C. Z. Yoder, 1845-1939, Photograph Collection.

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Historical
Committee



"Who are my mother and my brothers?"



Recently our Sunday School class at Evanston Mennonite Church studied the Gospel of Mark, attempting to read the book with fresh eyes. In Chapter 3 we discussed Jesus's surprising response to the news that his mother and brothers, worried for his sanity, had been trying to see him: "Who are my mother and my brothers?"

Most of us in the class had first encountered this passage in our youth. Then, it wasn't hard to imagine that the young Jesus had more pressing demands than obliging some fretful family members following him around. But now, reading the passage in middle age, we discovered we identified with Jesus's mother and brothers, who trailed behind him out of love and concern, hoping for a word. Our class agreed that we found Jesus's apparent dismissal of family ties disquieting.

Mennonite culture holds family in high esteem. No people is without its family strains or even tragic divisions, but I think Mennonites for the most part look to their families as a source of identity, mutual support, and healthy laughter. The old admonition to children to "remember who you are" is effective, even comforting, because it conjures up the notion that "the forefathers and foremothers are with you." It is hardly surprising that many of us find our family trees important and fascinating.

This issue's focus on genealogy and genetics acknowledges the efforts some give to uncovering, preserving, and sharing family history at the elemental level of bloodlines and kinship ties. The interview with Betty Hartzler includes her view that her labor to make genealogical information available can point toward self-realization, both for individuals and a denomination. Sarah Kehrberg's article on DNA testing, and John Thiesen's survey of old and new record-keeping, reveal giant steps forward in genealogical research. With a scrape of cells inside our cheek, or a tap on the computer's Return key, we now can know very much, very quickly, about where we come from.

But in knowing our genealogical pedigree, and the identity of those who share it, do we know enough? At its best, our denomination says no. No; the kingdom of God will not be mapped along biological frontiers.

In this regard, we parents of students at Mennonite colleges could learn something from the blithe indifference our children show toward all those campus genealogical

connections we are so eager to point out. Our kids have their priorities straight when, in their insouciance toward bloodlines, they might as well paraphrase Mark 3:33: "Who are, or are not, my cousins, as long as they are my friends?" We can gain perspective in studying our lineage, but then, as Betty Hartzler states, "The other part is what you and God do together with the life and background you've been given."

Strong appreciation for family connections hardly condemns a people to be ingrown; it can inspire us to spread the connections around. I think, for example, of how simple hospitality stretches family boundaries ("Make yourself at home"); how as Goshen College Study-Service Term participants, we referred to our hosts as our Haitian mothers and fathers, and meant it; how a Ugandan household in a northern village lovingly fostered my brother-in-law's family, complete strangers, upon their arrival as Mennonite Central Committee workers.

The images Dennis Stoesz presents in his Scrapbook selection reveal how the Mennonite impulse to make family connections can transcend genetic borders, whether through marriage, the adoption of children, or service with brothers and sisters outside the *Freundschaft*. Rooting our ultimate family tree in Christ permits us to consider that in the cryptic rhetoric of Mark 3:33, Jesus may not dismiss family feeling so much as suggest we enlarge it: "Who is *not* my mother, my brother?"

—Susan Fisher Miller

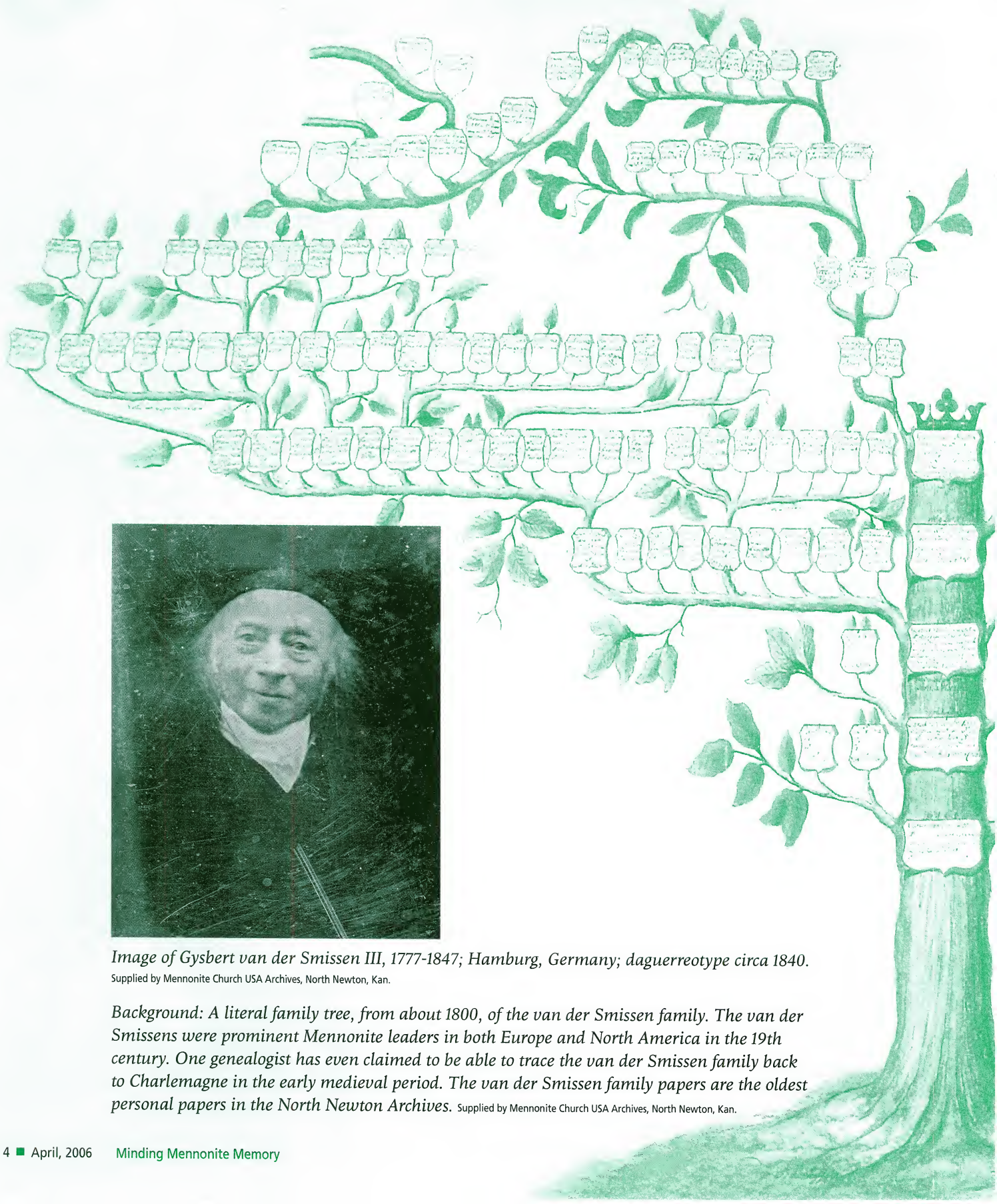


Image of Gysbert van der Smissen III, 1777-1847; Hamburg, Germany; daguerreotype circa 1840.
Supplied by Mennonite Church USA Archives, North Newton, Kan.

Background: A literal family tree, from about 1800, of the van der Smissen family. The van der Smissens were prominent Mennonite leaders in both Europe and North America in the 19th century. One genealogist has even claimed to be able to trace the van der Smissen family back to Charlemagne in the early medieval period. The van der Smissen family papers are the oldest personal papers in the North Newton Archives. Supplied by Mennonite Church USA Archives, North Newton, Kan.



An Interview with Betty J. Hartzler by Kara Hartzler

Genealogy as a window of understanding*

Betty J. (Graber) Hartzler began tracing her family's genealogy over 30 years ago. She has produced two cemetery listings, a database of over 56,000 names, and is currently working on her seventh genealogy book. She and daughter Kara Hartzler sat down one afternoon to talk about genealogy, faith, and historical trends in the Mennonite Church.

KH: What initially sparked your interest in genealogy?

BH: I think it was in 1974 when our family moved from Kansas to Belleville, Pennsylvania, to give you children a chance to live near your dad, Ken Hartzler's, family. One day we bought a Hertzler/Hartzler book, and I started leafing through it. On page 20-something, I found the names of some of our old neighbors who were still in Kansas, and that started the wheels of curiosity spinning. Why are these non-Mennonite Kansas neighbors listed in the same book as my husband's Amish-Mennonite Pennsylvania family? I began tracing the Kansas neighbors' families back and found it was because they had moved to Kansas in 1890 and formed the Amish part of a group that would later start the Mennonite church in Hesston, Kansas. This piqued my interest even more: Why did certain people move? Why are some no longer in the church? What explains the ebb and flow of a church group, and what keeps them hanging together as a people? I started tracing Dad's extended family using index cards—each family on one index card. At first I picked out only people who were related to us. Later I enlarged the collection to groups of people with a common history. As my interest grew, so did my method of tracking.

KH: What did you do next?

BH: About three years later, we attended the Megli reunion on my mother's side. For that reunion, I created a huge 30-foot family chart with magic markers, each generation a different color, and put it up in the hallway so each person could see which family and generation they were from. People would look at the chart, find their names, and say, "Oh, I'm from Mariah's line and you're from Fannie's line. We must be third cousins." The chart made it easier to understand how you were related to the person who had been sitting across from you at dinner last night.

Next, I started talking to my Grandpa Kaufman and asked him to write down his memories of growing up. Since he was over 100 years old, it was interesting to

imagine what life was like in his youth, and to be able to recognize our family characteristics running through several generations. I talked to aunts and uncles on my dad's side and asked each of them to write down stories of when they were growing up. Some of the uncles just said, "Come over and I'll talk and you can write it down." So I started a notebook that had oral histories in it. This notebook system has now turned into 30-some notebooks of different family lines, with stories, pictures—anything of relevance I come across, I put in its family notebook.

KH: What does most of your day-to-day genealogical work consist of?

BH: What I originally did with the Swiss-Russian Mennonites was to take all the pertinent genealogy books from the Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College—maybe 30 or 40—and enter the families into the database through the male line up to the current generation. Now I'm starting to go back to those same genealogy books and become more inclusive of different surnames. New books are being written all the time, so I add the information in those as well as what people send me through the Internet. The second database I've created is based on early Amish Mennonite settlers and cemeteries in Harvey County, Kansas, and the third one on Amish Mennonites in Kishacoquillas Valley (Belleville), Pennsylvania.

KH: Have you had opportunities to work with other historians or genealogists?

BH: When Dad and I were part of the planning for our Kansas congregation's centennial celebration, I had the chance to work with Joe Miller, a historian

who authored a book on the history of Whitestone Mennonite Church in Hesston, Kansas. I created a booklet listing all the gravesites in the church cemetery and their relation to each other and to the present generation. It also traced persons buried there back to their families' original homesteads.

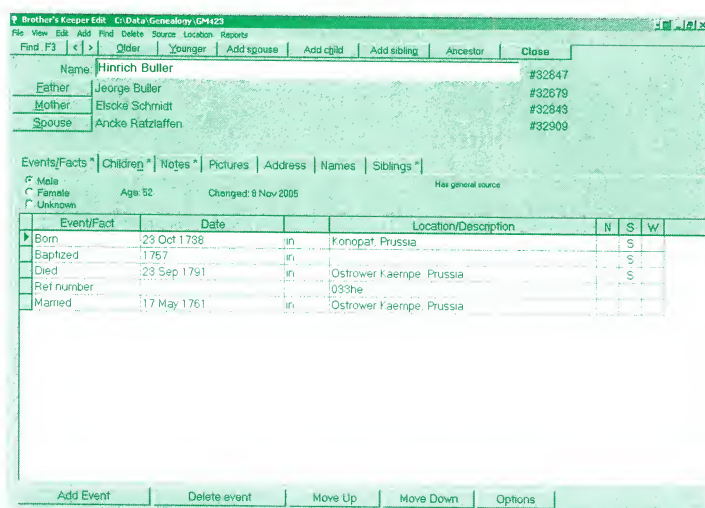
On one visit to Belleville, Pennsylvania before we had moved there, I tried to find the gravestones of several of my husband's relatives in the Locust Grove cemetery and realized there was no written record of the cemetery. So I started with an old county listing from the 1950s and added what information I could from the gravestones and then filled in details from genealogy books. Then one summer I had a rare opportunity to work with Dr. Bethany Usher and her research students, gathering data on every Amish-Mennonite grave in Mifflin County, Pennsylvania. I have since put the information into a booklet, "God's People at Rest," and people who know their ancestors' names can now go to the cemetery and walk directly to the gravesites.

Around 1980 our family got our first computer, and since then, with the help of the software program Brother's Keeper, I've transferred all the information from my index cards, notebooks, genealogy books, and oral history into computer format. Then in the late 1990s, Historical Committee Director John Sharp set up a web page where persons can access my data. I usually receive several inquiries a week from people who have visited my website and have additional questions. I receive a lot of satisfaction in helping people learn about themselves.

KH: When you're dealing with these large quantities of data, are you able to identify any particular trends?

BH: Yes, I particularly enjoy seeing trends in names, family size, mobility, church affiliation. You can almost define a generation by some of these things. Take names, for instance. Names through the generations go from Jacob and Maria, to Leroy and Elsie, to Sharon and Gary, to Stephanie and Greg. Now the trend is going back to the original biblical names such as Joel and Hannah. Often as a church becomes more liberal, the names stray from biblical ones. Family lines tend to use certain names and stay away from others. For instance, the name Peter was used again and again in my dad's family but not at all on my mother's side.

Family size has definitely changed. It's gone from larger families, often to 20 children when pioneers were working the land, down to four or five or even one or two when people began to move off the land and into urban areas.



A computer screen shot showing family information for Hinrich Buller, born in Prussia in 1738. The entry for Hinrich Buller is part of the massive CD-ROM genealogical database of Mennonite ancestors, GRANDMA, sponsored by the California Mennonite Historical Society. Image supplied by Mennonite Church USA Archives, North Newton, Kan.

Another trend is mobility, which can be traced through the locations of a family's births and deaths. There was a period of immigration in 1750-1874, and then a generation that stayed settled, then a westward movement around 1890, when large numbers of Amish and Mennonites spread out across the country, then a generation that again settled and established farmsteads. My generation began scattering again through the I-W and voluntary service programs.

KH: Since you've been tracing mostly Mennonite families, do you see any particular patterns in the Mennonite church?

BH: It's interesting to trace the Mennonite church through movements such as the Daniel Kauffman/fundamentalist movement of the 1920s that put a strong emphasis on cape dresses and straight-cut coats. In such movements, the first generation is usually the strongest. The next generation follows the belief outwardly, but may do so only because of church requirements. By the third generation, the children are leaving the church because the rules and regulations have just become a shell of the original belief. This cycle is repeated time after time, with always a remnant preserved.

KH: When you say remnant, what do you mean?

BH: As the lines fade between church and society and materialism makes inroads, the church often loses not only its distinctive marks of language or dress but also its core beliefs. But I do think God always preserves a remnant. These remnants are often found in churches that can draw a sharp line between themselves and society at large without heavy-handed rules that drive away the young people. That thread of preservation keeps running through even as parts of the church veer off on either the conservative or liberal side.

KH: What do you want to accomplish through genealogy?

BH: One of my goals is to turn genealogy from a stuffy, boring pastime into a user-friendly system that helps people to understand who they are. It's important for people to realize that they are who they are because of their background or roots. The other part is what you and God do together with the life and background you've been given.

We're currently living in Big Valley, Pennsylvania, which is an area with a wealth of history but very little of it preserved. I find it exciting to be part of several groups doing just that work—preserving artifacts and oral histories for future generations.

KH: I've heard you talk about the fact that your interest in genealogy is rooted in your faith. Where do you think the intersection is between those two?

BH: When I started entering the entire genealogy books from the Bethel College historical library, I realized that here was a story of one group of people that God had led from Switzerland, to France, to Russia, and America. I think working with genealogy has been a very healthy thing, giving me roots, not only in terms of family systems, but also in terms of learning how people operate, how churches grow and decline—basically just how God leads through a group of people.

I think it's helpful to understand who we are in light of our past. For example, God says your sins will follow you to the seventh generation—why or how does that happen? And I don't think inheritance works just in the case of large matters like sins. For instance, in our family, why does the Graber family have such a love for fruit and cheese? Well, you go back to Switzerland and because of persecution, the Grabers moved further and further up in the mountains. This meant they couldn't sell their milk daily in town, so they became good cheesemakers and transported it that way. The family is now perhaps ten generations removed, but we still have a love of cheese! While in Russia, the family grew lots of fruit, which they brought with them when they came to America. Is this why I eat more fruit than my husband does? His family came directly to America and didn't bring over fruit and berry seeds.

Genealogy has helped my understanding of God and how he works with a group of people—his church. It's also taught me that we are who we are because of our past, whether good or bad. Once we have that awareness, we can use its strength and begin moving forward.

Betty J. Hartzler, a member of the Historical Committee, is regional sales manager for Ten Thousand Villages, a program of Mennonite Central Committee. She lives in Belleville, Pennsylvania, where she serves on the boards of the Mifflin County Mennonite Historical Society and the Kishacoquillas Valley Historical Society.

Kara Hartzler, a lawyer, resides in Oracle, Arizona, and works for the Florence Project, a non-profit organization serving detained illegal immigrants.

* This article appeared in slightly different form in *DreamSeeker Magazine*, August 2001.

Putting your family tree to the genetic test

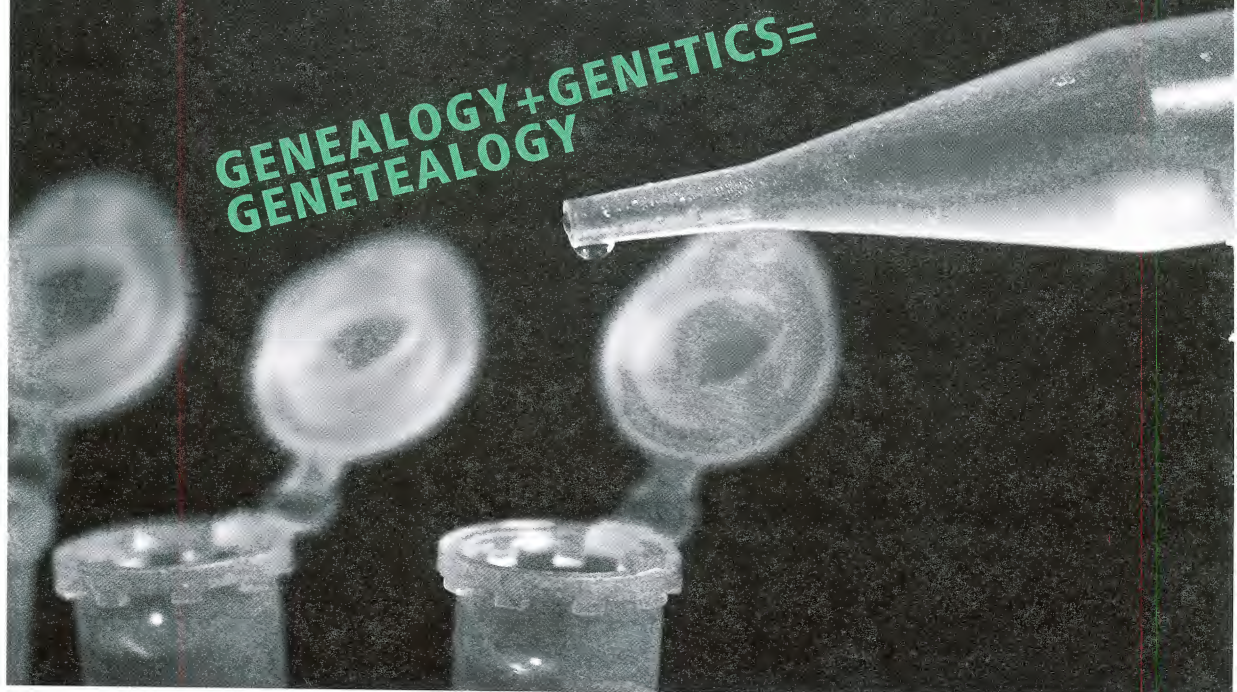
By Sarah Kehrberg

And I thought my family was special.

When I was an awkward pre-teen, my grandfather informed the family that he had discovered we had Native American blood in our veins. Actually, his slightly more poetic (but less politically correct) way of putting it was that my cousin Amy (his oldest child's oldest child) was "1/64 beautiful Indian maiden." This announcement, of course, made me 1/64 Indian as well, and to my romantic twelve-year-old self I had just been rebaptized an Indian princess.

Tragically for my youthful dream, but not surprisingly, a local historian later proved that our German (Amish) family is pretty much 100 percent non-Native American. But no matter—I still claim a wild and free Native American spirit.

GENEALOGY+GENETICS=
GENETEALOGY



Source: Stock photography from fotolia.com.

And so, apparently, do quite a few people who live in America, according to the authors of the 2004 volume *Trace your Roots with DNA*.¹ Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak (piques your genealogical interest right there, doesn't it?) and Ann Turner, whose book is subtitled "Using Genetic Tests to Explore Your Family Tree," write that, right up there with rumors of illegitimacy, adoption, and famous ancestors, Native American intermarriage is a popular trope in family lore. Before DNA testing and the Human Genome Project, these family legends could only be proved or disproved by written or oral record. Since both of these methods often turn out to be unreliable or simply lead to a genealogical brick wall, amateur family genealogists are rapidly becoming knowledgeable in and appreciative of the information DNA testing can give them about their past. On a more global scale, geneticists, anthropologists, and archaeologists are using DNA to tell a more complete story of the human family as a whole.

While DNA testing is certainly not the ultimate smoking gun in genealogical sleuthing, it is most definitely providing answers that were considered impossible before, and it is gaining in popularity and use. Smolenyak and Turner have coined a word, "genetealogy," for this new marriage of genealogy and genetics that "provides a key for unlocking some secrets that the paper trail can never reveal."²

An interested observer but no scientist, I offer here a lay person's explanation of how the scientific process of DNA testing works.

We have DNA in each of our many cells. This DNA determines everything about us—from eye color to blood type to the acidity of our stomach. Because each of us is a product of two people, a mother and a father, our entire DNA comes from them. Of course, it is impossible to say how that DNA got combined and reconfigured after the egg was fertilized and started multiplying at a dizzying speed, *with the exception* of the DNA in our sex genes. We get one sex gene from each parent, and there is no interaction between them; therefore all DNA in our sex genes is distinct.

A female has two X chromosomes. A male has one X and one Y chromosome. So if you are a male, you had to get your Y from your father, as your

mother had no Y to give. And, by the same logic, your father got his Y from his father, and so on back into the mists of time. If you are male, your Y chromosomal DNA should be identical to that of your great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather (taking into account mutations that occur every 500 generations or so).

So how does DNA testing play out? If you are that long-descended male, do you dig up said ancestor's bones to test their DNA against your own? Sorry—that kind of escapade isn't realistic for anyone but eccentric billionaires and government agencies, and besides, Y-DNA can't be found in old bones. One thing to keep in mind for any male attempting to match his Y-DNA to his suspected ancestors or relatives is that, as the *Trace Your Ancestors* authors point out, "Y chromosome tests cannot prove that you share a *particular* ancestor with another person, only that you share a common ancestor at some point."³ This Y chromosome DNA lineage conveniently follows surnames in most cultures, so Y-DNA testing is a natural tool in surname studies. If two males with the same or similar surnames are distant cousins, then their Y-DNA tests should match up.

A current genetealogy case study that relies on Y-DNA testing may be found in the Longenecker family (that name the U.S. version of the Swiss Langenegger). The *Longenecker Family Newsletter*, published by Richard Cryer, is currently directing a research project using Y-DNA testing to trace the ancestry of the Longeneckers. The project's consultant is none other than *Trace Your Roots with DNA* author Ann Turner, and the undertaking is affiliated with a genealogy-driven DNA testing service called Family Tree DNA ("History Unearthed Daily"). As the project's page on the Family Tree DNA website explains, the Y-DNA testing in the Longenecker project will hope to differentiate "male 'Longenecker' ancestors who came, circa the 16th century, from about a dozen Langenegg or Langegg villages in the Alps (covering a 500-mile arc through parts of France, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and Italy) and those male Longacre ancestors who came from Sweden."⁴

Despite the fact that Longenecker descendants come from so many different villages, the common belief has been that they are genetically the same as one another (i.e., related). But this tradition of all Longeneckers being long lost cousins has



Eli S. Miller (center) with seven children, 1911, Elkhart County, Indiana. Left-right: Malinda E. Miller Schrock, 1866-1959; Lydia E. Miller Stutzman, 1854-1939; Elizabeth E. Miller Stahly, 1851-1946; Susanna E. Miller, 1850-1930; Eli S. Miller, 1821-1917; Levi E. Miller, 1843-1933; Jonas E. Miller, 1845-1934; and Harvey E. Miller, 1870-1953. Born in Holmes County, Ohio, on September 11, 1821, Eli S. Miller married Mary Kauffman, 1823-1900, in 1843. They had fifteen children, and moved to Elkhart County, Indiana in 1870. Eli served as minister in the Indiana-Michigan Amish Mennonite Church for forty-seven years.

Source: Raymond Mark Yoder Photograph Collection.

been challenged. Some scholars believe that the Langeneggers coming from a range of distinct Langenegg villages might be genetically distinct. The Family Tree DNA website states that “Y-DNA testing would solve the age-old mystery of family trees in Switzerland as well as in the U.S. This testing also explores the genetic relationship of the Swedish Longacres and the Swiss Langeneggers, as well as other families who came from different Langegg or Langenegg villages in the Alps.”⁵ In other words, where the paper trail runs out and oral tradition gets unreliable, Y-DNA testing may shed the light needed to sort out the Langeneggers from the Langeneggs.

The project’s website lists its goals as fourfold.⁶ The first goal is to identify ancestors of Longeneckers coming from the village of Langenegg (near Langnau, Canton Bern), Switzerland. This is the main branch of the Longenecker tree, which immigrated to the United States in the early 1700s and whose descendants today number 50,000 to 100,000.

A second immigration of Langeneggers (from the village of Langenegg, near Gais, Canton Appenzell, Switzerland) came to the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, settling in the Midwest and West Coast regions. A second goal would be to identify this branch of the Longenecker tree and see if they are genetically matched to the first group.

A third goal is to identify the project’s participants’ ancestors who came from other Langenegg or Langegg villages in the Alps.

And finally, the project would like to identify participants’ ancestors that come from the Swedish line of Longeneckers, descending from one Andrew Peterson Longacre.

As of February 2, 2006, 44 people had returned their cheek-scrapings, samples of tissue taken easily from inside one’s cheek and necessary for the test (which costs each participant around \$99). While you can read the more scientific results on the project’s website, suffice it to say that so far the findings suggest that, as the scholars suspected, not all Longeneckers are related. There seem to be three or more distinct groups: One from “Langenegg” slightly north of Langnau, Canton Bern; a second from “Langenegg” around Gais, Canton Appenzell; and a third from the Swedish branch of the surname group. Of course, the more people that participate in the Longenecker study, the more specific these findings can become.

Having examined the way in which a Y-DNA study can establish a common male ancestor, let us return to the females among us to quickly say that just because you have two X chromosomes doesn’t mean you are useless to DNA testing. If you remember back to a bygone science class and the first time you were asked to draw a cell, you will probably remember those things floating around in the cell that looked vaguely like chow mein noodles and were often colored purple. Those noodles are called mitochondria, the “energy power plants” of the cell. Muscle cells have more mitochondria than fat cells because they need more energy, and an egg waiting to be fertilized is jam-packed with mitochondria for the same reason—it has a whole lot of dividing to do! A sperm, on the other hand, has only a few mitochondria down in its tail, and, upon the

sperm reaching the egg, its tail falls off and all its mitochondria are lost.

This means that all your mitochondria are from your mother, and all her mitochondria came from her mother, and so on *ad infinitum*. Of course, males' mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) can be tested for their maternal line as well (but the mtDNA of males' offspring will *not* reveal their father's maternal line, only their own maternal inheritance).

Finally, after considering here some of the emerging wonders of applying DNA testing to genealogy, a word of warning against unlimited expectations. Smolenyak and Turner write, "Some critics dismiss the value of genealogy because it can not prove descent from a particular ancestor. Proof is a strong word. DNA testing is a novel, objective, and independent form of evidence, which can support, validate, confirm, reinforce, substantiate, and corroborate other items of evidence you have acquired for your theory. ... DNA testing does not stand alone. It goes hand in hand with traditional genealogical research."⁷

So don't throw out the large dusty family Bible or the old tomes of genealogical research. Pre-digital and too large for a microscope, these traditional tools nonetheless remain relevant in determining identity. We may also wish to hang on to imagination, which can permit a girl of irrefutable Swiss-German genetics to claim a wild, free, Native American heritage of spirit.



Sarah Kehrberg lives in Lexington, Kentucky with her husband and two young daughters.

Endnotes

¹ Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak and Ann Turner, *Trace Your Roots with DNA: Using Genetic Tests to Explore Your Family Tree* (New York: Rodale, 2004).

² *Ibid.*, x.

³ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴ [http://www.familytreedna.com/\(fomiktqocuzp2srlmwymf3j\)/public/Longenecker/index.aspx](http://www.familytreedna.com/(fomiktqocuzp2srlmwymf3j)/public/Longenecker/index.aspx).

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Smolenyak and Turner, 57.



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Listed below are the many people who contribute time and money to the work of the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee. We are very grateful for the effort of our volunteers and the generosity of our financial donors. Their contributions are evidence of the deep interest in our mission.

During this past year, volunteers worked more than 3,000 hours at our archives in Goshen and in Newton. Our financial supporters contributed over \$46,000 to our work during the past fiscal year.

On behalf of the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee, I thank everyone for what you do to help this important work.

—Franklin Yoder, Interim Director

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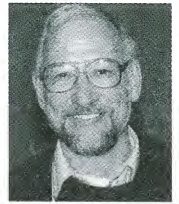
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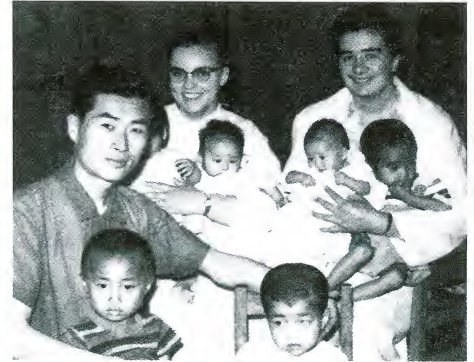


Scrapbook page, Goshen

By Dennis Stoesz, Archivist



Vic Dardar visiting with Janna Bowman, Louisiana, 1979. Mr. Dardar, a keen family historian and part of the approximately 6,000 Houma Indians descended from legendary tribal leader Rosalie Courteaux, served as a resource to Janna's parents, Greg and Ellen Bowman, in their work in southern Louisiana under Mennonite Central Committee. The Bowmans helped document the history and culture of the Houma tribe. Source: Mennonite Central Committee Collection.



A Korean physician, Dr. Lee, with nurses Esther Thiessen and Lydia Schlabach, transferring orphaned children from Seoul Children's Relief Hospital to an orphanage, 1961. In the aftermath of the Korean War, 1950-53, Mennonites, in addition to orphanage work, sponsored children, assisted families in self-help programs, and started a vocational school. Some Mennonite families adopted Korean orphans. Source: Mennonite Central Committee Collection.



Left: Four generations of the Yoder family, ranging in birth from 1844 to 1927, Wayne County, Ohio. In birth order (seated) Jemima Zook Yoder, 1844-1930; (back left) C. Z. Yoder, 1845-1939; (back right) John Smiley Yoder, 1870-1959; (back center) Howard Christian Yoder, 1897-1983; (front in Jemima's lap) John Howard Yoder, 1927-1997. Jemima Yoder was the second wife of John K. Yoder, 1824-1906 (not pictured), whom she married in 1889. Source: C. Z. Yoder, 1845-1939, Photograph Collection.

Right: Mennonite minister Hubert Brown (right) and TourMagination co-founder Arnold Cressman (left) talking with one Mrs. Haslibacher on an Anabaptist history tour in 1977. Haslibacher's husband descended from Anabaptist martyr Hans Haslibacher, who was executed October 20, 1571, in the canton of Bern, Switzerland. The spiritual roots tour by Brown, Cressman and fellow travelers commemorated the 450th anniversary of the Schleithem Confession of Faith. Source: Gospel Herald cover, August 9, 1977.



Minding
Mennonite
Memory

By John D. Thiesen, Archivist



Supplied by Mennonite Church USA Archives, North Newton, Kan.



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The Mennonite Library and Archives' approach to family history and basic biographical information has changed significantly in the last ten years. The California Mennonite Historical Society sponsors a database on CD-ROM called GRANDMA (Genealogical Registry and Database of Mennonite Ancestors) which contains data on about 800,000 people, with a focus on Russian Mennonites and Hutterites.

Supplied by Mennonite Church USA Archives, North Newton, Kan.

The record book of the Mennonite congregation in Danzig/Gdansk, Poland. The book was begun around 1800, but contains dates back into the 1700s. The record book was rescued from the burned out church building by Mennonite Central Committee workers after World War II. Supplied by Mennonite Church USA Archives, North Newton, Kan.

Genealogy as belonging

I still remember the euphoria I felt when I saw the name of my great-great-grandfather, John Fisher, in the 1850 Federal census for Tippecanoe County, Indiana—my first big genealogical find in this obscure part of our family tree. As I sat at the microfilm reader and realized I had found the correct John Fisher, I felt as if I had discovered gold.

Genealogy is a strangely captivating pursuit. People become engrossed in a quest that matters nothing to almost everyone else. Have you ever had conversations with strangers who feel compelled to give you the details of their family trees? It is usually boredom of the worst kind. Yet, if someone I encounter knows something new about my ancestors, that person is my instant best friend and confidant.

What drives people to spend hours looking for information about ordinary people who have left only scanty pieces of information about themselves? Few others care about that Tippecanoe County John Fisher of 1850, but finding his name was monumental for me.

I suspect this search has to do with a need to connect with our past in a tangible way. Our ancestors remind us that we have come from somewhere. Psychologists would no doubt tell us that the human need to belong is essential. Genealogy is one way of knowing we belong.

Genealogy operates at different levels. For some, knowing when their ancestors were born, married, and died is sufficient. For others, the details of ancestors' lives become part of a larger search. Reading a ship's passenger list leads to questions of what motivated people to risk a long and dangerous ocean voyage. The possessions recorded in a probate record remind us of how people lived in an age of hand labor and self-sufficiency. A graveyard containing the markers of children and young women is evidence of how dangerous disease and childbirth were in a time when medicine involved as much superstition as science.

Genealogy can change us. In an informational and fundraising letter I sent last October, I referred to the story of a woman whose faith grew as she read the obituaries of her ancestors. When we realize that previous generations have faced their own times of crisis and uncertainty, it reminds us that our problems are usually neither new nor insurmountable. I am humbled when I see the faith my ancestors demonstrated and I ask myself if I have achieved the level of faith, patience, and endurance I read in their lives. —*Franklin Yoder*



Visit our web site at www.MennoniteUSA.org/history

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In this issue



Page 5: "Cheyenne, Arapaho, Mennonite: Journey to Darlington," the Historical Committee-sponsored conference held in Oklahoma March 30-April 2, 2006, is presented in overview by reporter David L. Habegger. Pictured here: Donna Chasenah offers her session, "Red Moon: Chief, Community/School, Mission and Cemetery."



Page 9: Ramona Old Bear Welch assists in taking an offering. Read Willis Busenitz's conference sermon "Journey of Faith: Three Peoples, Fellow Travelers."



Page 14: The Scrapbook Pages this month offer conference images, personalities, events. Shown above: Dorothy Nickel Friesen, conference minister of the Western District Conference, addressing "Journey from Darlington" participants.



Page 15: David Graber, transcriber of Cheyenne songs. See the Scrapbook for a sampling of conference experiences.

On the cover: Cheyenne peace chiefs Sam Hart and Edwin Pewo, Return to the Earth burial ground dedication ceremony, April 1, 2006, Cheyenne Cultural Center, Clinton, Oklahoma. Conference logo design: Gordon Yellowman, Sr.

All conference photos in the issue courtesy John Sharp, conference planning staff

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Historical
Committee



Dreaming up a genuine happening



Last spring's "Cheyenne, Arapaho, Mennonite: Journey from Darlington" conference, the focus of this month's *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*, calls to mind that well-worn phrase adapted from the film "Field of Dreams": "If you build it, they will come." When, years ago, several members of Mennonite Church

USA Historical Committee and friends in Oklahoma first imagined such a gathering devoted to shared Mennonite and Cheyenne history, they were building an event, ultimately hosted March 30-April 2 in Clinton, Oklahoma, to which, wonderfully, many came.

Readers who were not present at "Journey from Darlington" have likely by now noticed stories about the meetings in the church press, or spoken with conference participants. By all accounts, the gathering in Oklahoma constituted a genuine happening—one of those collective experiences in which climate, company, and charisma conspire to transform those present. Joel Alderfer in the current *MHEP Quarterly* recalls reticent conference onlookers being drawn in to join the Plains Indian dance: "As a somewhat conservative person, I found this process interesting to watch and then, amazingly became a part of the dance myself!" As Frank Yoder describes the phenomenon in this month's Back Page essay, "Being there and seeing, tasting, hearing, and participating made history come alive in a new way. After such an event, the world is never as simple as it was before."

A beautiful yet frustrating aspect of such an experience, of course, is its elusiveness: as Yoder implies, *you had to be there*. Even the committee and local hosts, for all the planning and prayers poured into preparing the event, could not completely predict what dynamics would emerge, once the conference was "built" and the people came. Still, there are benefits to trying to spread the experience around. The reports and images we offer here attempt to channel the letter and spirit of the Oklahoma happening.

Many people helped create this month's *Bulletin*. David L. Habegger's careful report covers much of the conference content and raises interesting parting

questions. Willis Busenitz's sermon thoughtfully juxtaposes three peoples who are seldom contemplated as fellow travelers. John Sharp, usually known as speaker and writer, provided all the photographs that appear in this issue, portraits by turn documentary, iconic, and charming. Dee Birkey employed her usual flair in matters of layout and design, and Don Garber offered careful copy editing. Along with the authors of articles, Raylene Hinz-Penner and Lawrence and Betty Hart supplied necessary facts and identifications.

One reason to tell and re-tell the "Journey from Darlington" experience is that the journey is hardly over. In an excellent "Speaking Out" column published in the July 4 *The Mennonite*, Melanie Zuercher pays tribute to Lawrence Hart, alludes to the uncertain future of the Oklahoma Mennonite congregations, and invites our participation in Return to the Earth, the hopeful but as-yet unfinished project to repatriate Native American sacred objects and human remains in regional cemeteries, including the one dedicated last spring at Clinton's Cheyenne Cultural Center.

The planners and hosts of "Journey from Darlington" dreamed up a conference, erected a traditional willow shade in the Clinton Frisco Center, and ended up with a happening. Our church needs more happenings, encounters after which "the world is never as simple as it was before."

If you build it. . . .

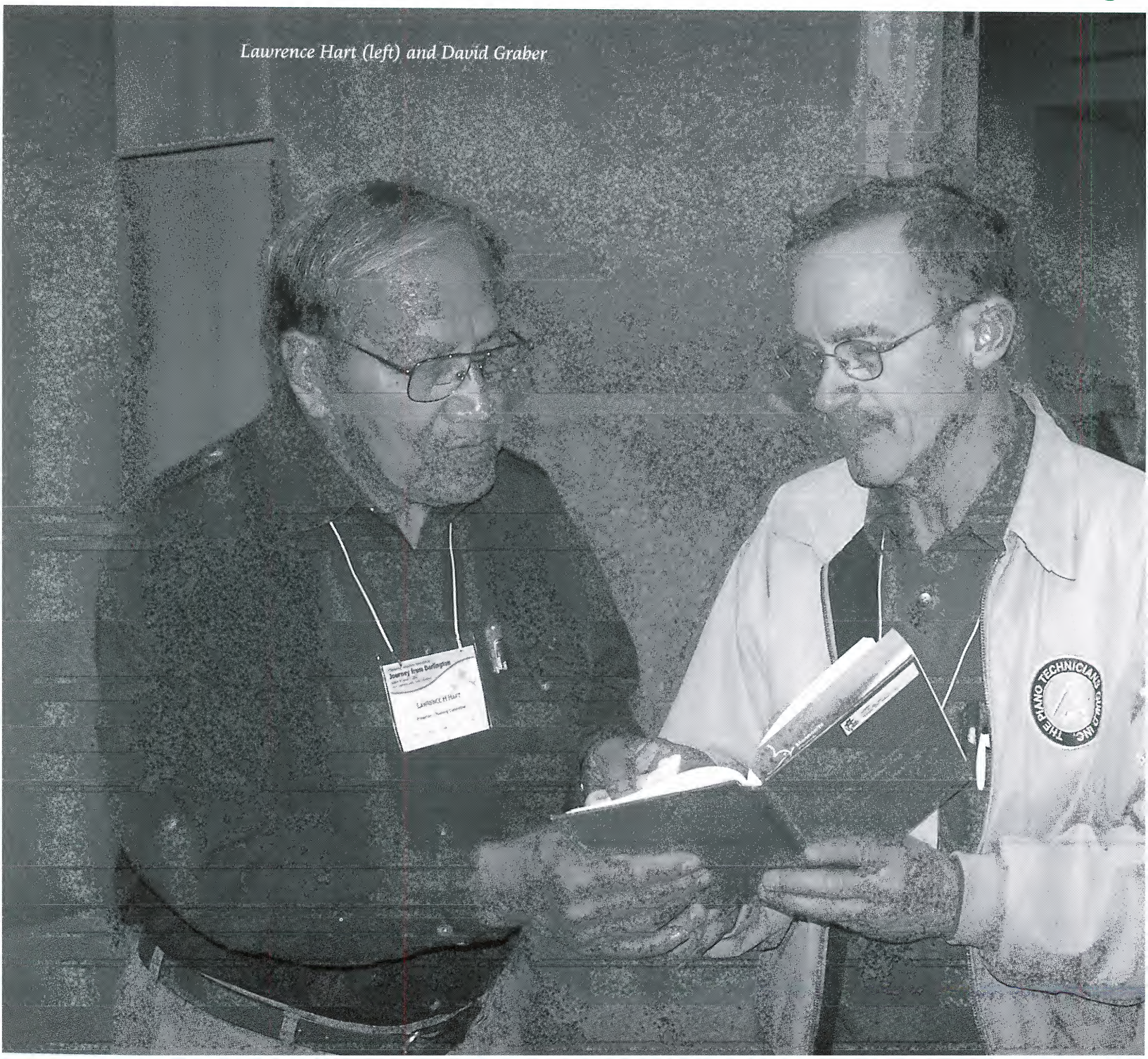
—Susan Fisher Miller



David Habegger, Newton, Kansas, was asked to report for Mennonite Historical Bulletin on the "Cheyenne, Arapaho, Mennonite: Journey from Darlington" conference earlier this spring. The conference was sponsored by the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA and organized by a planning committee consisting of James Juhnke (chair), Raylene Hinz-Penner, Lawrence Hart, Betty E. Hart, Richard Friesen, Jane Janzen, Joyce M. Twins, Roger Juhnke, and John Sharp (staff). Readers may consult the conference program at www.mcusa-archives.org.

Cheyenne, Arapaho, Mennonite: Report on the "Journey

Lawrence Hart (left) and David Graber



from Darlington" conference

by David L. Habegger



One hundred twenty-five years after the General Conference Mennonite Church began sending missionaries to work among the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian people in Oklahoma, a conference exploring the legacy of those interactions was held in Clinton, Oklahoma. The “Cheyenne, Arapaho, Mennonite: Journey from Darlington” conference, sponsored by the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA, was called to explore the connections and expressions of faith through time and culture. The intent of the conference was to honor the past, acknowledge wounds, and contribute to the mission of the church.

“Journey from Darlington” was held March 30–April 1, 2006, in the Frisco Conference Center at Clinton, Oklahoma, drawing 250 registered participants. Persons who attended the conference came for various reasons. They came to learn about the past and to reconnect with Indian friends. The history of the mission work was presented primarily through some of the 22 workshop sessions, whose topics ranged from Cheyenne language and traditional foods to Cheyenne hymnody to a comparative study of General George Custer and missionary Samuel Haury. On Friday evening Dr. Donald Fixico, professor of history at Arizona State University, presented the keynote address, “Dynamics of Indian Leadership.” The conference concluded with traditional Plains Indian dancing demonstrations on Saturday evening and a worship service on Sunday morning.

Conference Opening

The conference began with co-moderators John Sharp and Lawrence Hart standing under a simulated tree branch arbor, reminiscent of arbors erected by the Cheyenne for shade from the summer sun. Under such arbors the early Mennonite missionaries began sharing their faith.

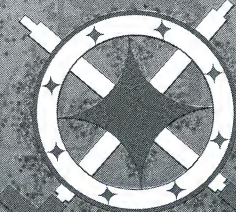
In the opening prayer for the conference, John Sharp, former director of the Historical Committee now employed at Hesston College, gave thanks for brothers and sisters among the Cheyenne and Arapaho people and for the opportunity to renew and remember our interconnected relationships. He also gave thanks for those who have gone before us to serve.

Lawrence Hart, Mennonite minister and Cheyenne peace chief, gave a summary review of how the General Conference Mennonites were invited to start a mission by the U.S. government agent for the recently established reservation for the Cheyenne

Cheyenne, Arapaho, Mennonite: Journey from Darlington

March 30-April 2, 2006

Prisco Conference Center
Clinton, Oklahoma



Mennonite
Church
USA
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and Arapaho tribes. That government agent was John Miles, a Quaker. The first missionary couple was the recently married Samuel and Susanna (Hirschler) Haury, who began their work in 1880 at the school for Cheyenne and Arapaho children at Darlington, Oklahoma.

Raylene Hinz-Penner, professor of English at Washburn University and member of the conference planning committee, made an opening address on the life and influence of Lawrence Hart as a significant legacy of the mission work among the Cheyenne. Professor Hinz-Penner reported how she became interested in Peace Chief Hart and that interviews over the past four years have led to a book, *Searching for*

Sacred Ground: The Journey of Chief Lawrence Hart, Mennonite, a forthcoming publication of Cascadia Publishing House. As the son of Mennonite minister Homer Hart, Lawrence grew up in the Mennonite congregation known as the Red Moon Church. The church was named after Chief Red Moon, who was the first Cheyenne baptized by missionary Rodolphe Petter. Lawrence Hart learned more about Mennonites when he attended Bethel College in Kansas, graduating in 1961.

While serving in the U.S. Air Force Hart received a call from his tribe to become one of its 44 chiefs. This call required that he take a vow of nonviolence and non-retaliation against any who might harm his family. He took this oath and became a peace chief on June 15, 1958. He was called to serve as a minister in the Koinonia Mennonite Church in Clinton, Oklahoma, in 1963. He was ordained in this congregation on November 7, 1965, and has continued as its pastor since then.

Hinz-Penner reported how Lawrence Hart has found congruencies between his Cheyenne and Mennonite heritage. He understands the Spirit of God as the wind that moves through all people. In becoming a peace chief he found meaningful links between his Cheyenne and Mennonite roots. Other links are a concern for the earth and a life committed to service and simplicity.

Visit to the Washita

A significant event during the second day of the conference was a field trip to the Washita Battlefield



Raylene Hinz-Penner (left), conference opening speaker, in conversation with conference participant. Hinz-Penner's biography of Chief Lawrence Hart, *Searching for Sacred Ground*, is forthcoming.

National Historic Site. On November 27, 1868, just 12 years before the Mennonites arrived at Darlington, then Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer and his army attacked a village of Cheyennes led by Peace Chief Black Kettle. The National Park Service has named this site a "battlefield." But in reality, the events at Washita constituted more massacre than battle. Chief Black Kettle had signed four treaties with the U.S. government prior to this attack, and he had just returned from traveling one hundred miles in an attempt to parlay with General William B. Hazen, reaffirming his group's peaceful status and requesting the army to not attack them.

The conference attendees traveled nearly 60 miles from Clinton to the Washita River site, where 35 men, women, and children, including Black Kettle and his wife, Medicine Woman Later, were killed after being attacked at dawn. We gathered around a pavilion at the park entrance, and, after an introduction by a National Park Service officer, Chief Lawrence Hart sang a memorial Cheyenne song. About 120 of us slowly and meditatively walked a mown path to the massacre site. A park ranger with a mobile speaker system led the solemn procession, stopping frequently to give an account of what occurred.

Lawrence Hart has made a connection between the shooting deaths of Black Kettle and his wife, Medicine Woman Later, in the Washita River as



Field trip to Washita Battlefield National Historical Site, location of the 1868 Washita massacre

they sought to flee from the attacking army, and the drowning death of Anabaptist Felix Mantz in the Limmat River of Zurich, Switzerland. Being put to death by unsympathetic governments in spite of these figures' commitment to peace makes them all martyrs. This legacy of oppression, grief, and pain unites the Cheyenne people and Anabaptist believers in a unique way.

Cultural Survival

The address by Dr. Clyde Ellis, professor of history at Elon University, North Carolina, on "The Christian Faith and Indian Cultural Survival" recounted the value of the Christian faith for the Kiowa Indians of Oklahoma. After telling aspects of the history of the Kiowa tribe's experience with Christianity, Dr. Ellis gave reasons why the Kiowa people appreciate the Jesus way. The church helped them maintain their community life through meetings and family relationships. Their language was kept through the church. In particular, hymns in their language helped them remain Indian. They gained leaders through the church.

Return to the Earth

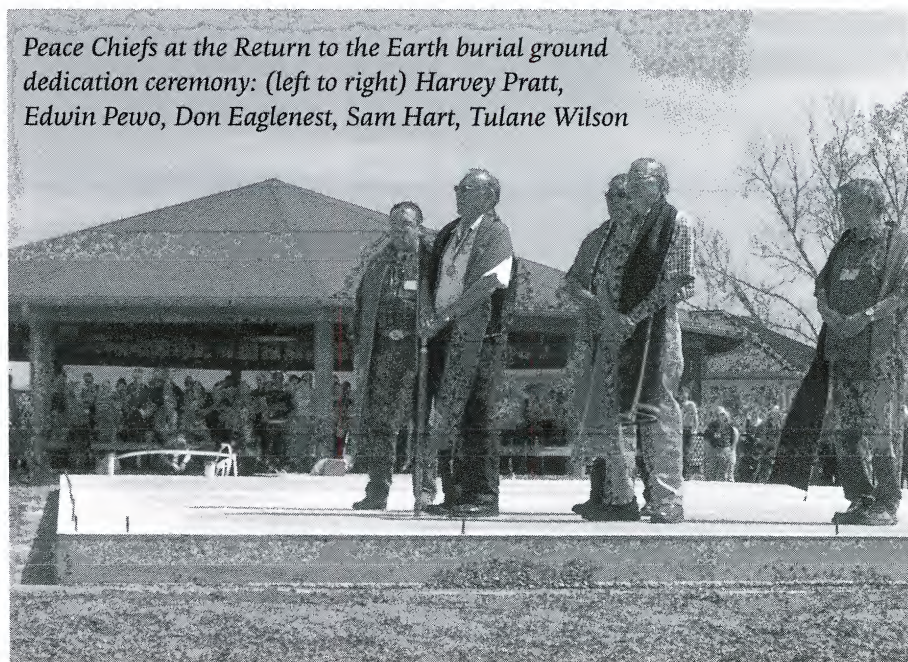
A historic effort arising out of the American Indians' love and respect for their parents and ancestors has been to have all the remains of their people that have been kept in museums returned to them. This led to the 1989 National Museum of the American Indian Act for Smithsonian Institution

collections and the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) for collections in museums receiving federal funds. The Cheyenne tribe has successfully repatriated and buried some ancestral remains, with Peace Chief Hart participating in those repatriation efforts. Hart has also served on NAGPRA's National Review Committee. Dr. Sherry Hutt, national NAGPRA program director, participated in the conference and reported that of the 200,000 Native American remains initially identified for repatriation, 118,000 are listed as culturally unidentifiable. To provide burial grounds for unidentified and unclaimed remains, Peace Chief Hart initiated the "Return to the Earth" project. The first site designated to receive repatriated

remains is the Cheyenne Cultural Center in Clinton, Oklahoma, of which Lawrence Hart is the director.

Conference attendees were taken to the Cheyenne Cultural Center to be present for the dedication of the visitor center for the Return to the Earth burial ground. The concrete floor for the building had been poured and five of the Cheyenne peace chiefs were present for the dedication ceremony. With their chieftancy shawls over their shoulders, they went to the four corners of the building and prayed

Peace Chiefs at the Return to the Earth burial ground dedication ceremony: (left to right) Harvey Pratt, Edwin Pewo, Don Eaglenest, Sam Hart, Tulane Wilson



as the attendees watched in silence. Mennonite Central Committee U.S., a partner in the Return to the Earth project, published a study guide that was released following the dedication ceremony.

Concluding Questions

One session of the conference focused on the "Statement of Confession" made in 1991 by the General Conference Mennonite Church, as the church anticipated the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Christopher Columbus in North America and that arrival's impact on Native American peoples. Only time will tell how much this 2006 "Journey from Darlington" conference may have contributed to the ongoing mission of the church. As a conference participant and reporter, I departed Oklahoma with several questions on how we proceed on the journey examined there. I take my leave here by raising them for our continuing consideration and conversation.

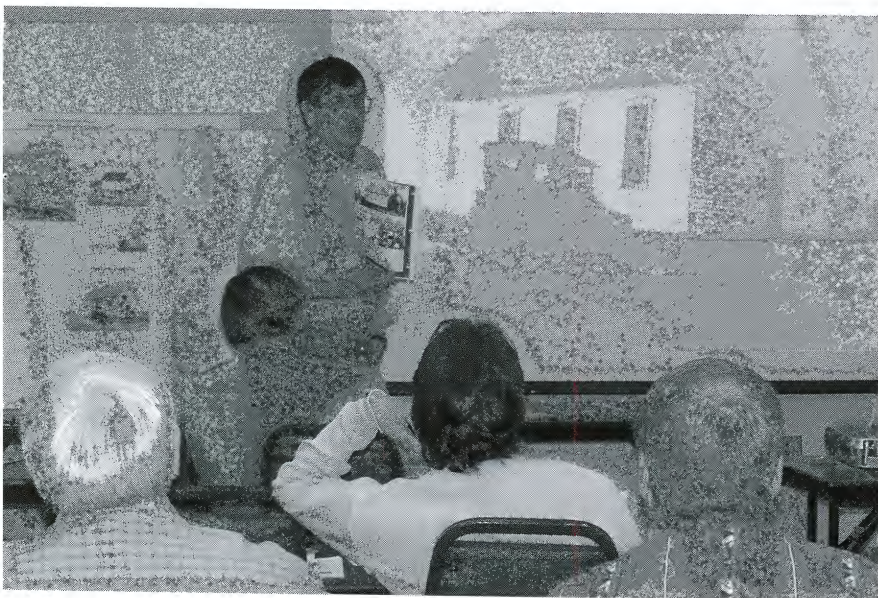
1. The transformation of the former Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church means that we have much to learn about early mission work by the "other" Mennonites. How can we tell these stories? Are there other pioneer ministries whose histories remain unexamined in current work being written about Mennonites around the globe?
2. American Indians consider certain places and rituals as sacred. To attach sacredness to place and ritual was also part of the Hebrew way of thinking, and it is part of the thinking of



(Left to right) Maretha Risingsun Charette, Betty Bartel Hart, Marie Big Back Littlewolf

the Roman Catholic Church. Anabaptists, by contrast, believed that any place could be one where a person connects with God. Are there bridges between these differing points of view?

3. How much participation in the Sun Dance, the religious communal ritual of the Plains Indians, should a Christian have? The separation from Indian rituals, emphasized by the missionaries, is being reevaluated. Some Cheyenne Christians are merging Christian and Indian faith, and others are seeking to reinterpret their Indian and Christian expressions of faith. To use an illustration from keynote conference presenter Don Fixico, some are working from the center of the tribe, while others are working more from the edge—either just inside the circle or just outside of it. Most of the Cheyenne Christians in Montana are primarily occasional onlookers at a Sun Dance ceremony.
4. There were about 50 Indian participants out of 250 participants overall at the conference, many integrated into the program as presenters and workshop leaders but fewer populating the audience. Does the lack of significant presence of Native Americans in the conference audience indicate that the Mennonite Church's agenda did not mesh with theirs?



Roger Juhnke tells the story of the Mennoville Mennonite Church



David L. Habegger is a retired Mennonite minister who was born and lived on the Northern Cheyenne Indian reservation in Montana. He served Mennonite churches in Montana, Indiana, Pennsylvania, California, and Illinois. He has a continuing interest in the Cheyenne people in both Montana and Oklahoma.

Journey of Faith:

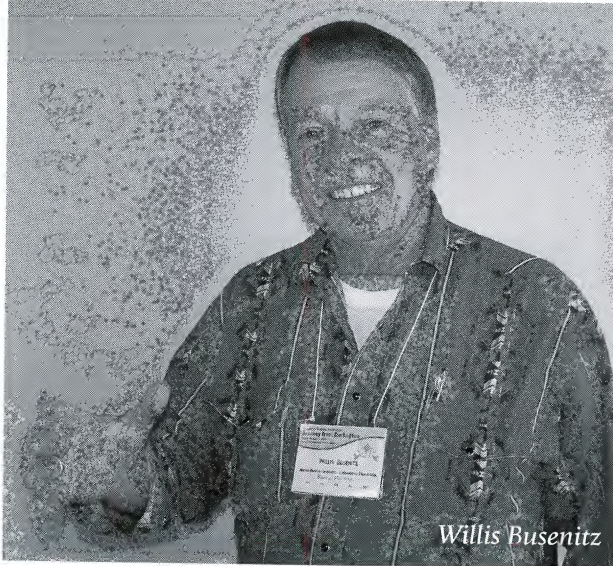
Three Peoples, Fellow Travelers

by Willis Busenitz

Willis Busenitz lives in Busby, Montana and pastors the White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church. He is married to Nadine and they have 3 children and 11 grandchildren. He grew up near Elbing, Kansas, a part of the Zion Mennonite Church. He has served in different capacities in Mennonite Church USA and Central Plains Mennonite Conference. Presently he serves as secretary for Native Mennonite Ministries.



Traditional Plains Indian dancing demonstration: (left to right) Ada Whitebird, Malcolm Whitebird, Eddie Henry



Peevavoona! Good morning! It is an honor and privilege to be asked to share with you this morning.

As I was reflecting on what I should speak about this morning, my thoughts kept coming back to the theme for this conference, “Cheyenne, Arapaho, Mennonite: Journey from Darlington.” To me this theme was a good choice. In a special way, the word *journey* intrigued me. This week all of us have gone on many journeys as we have traveled through historical events for Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Mennonites. *Journey* is a biblical word, or at least it was often referred to throughout the Scriptures, especially in the Old Testament. *Journey* is also a word that has often been used by the Cheyenne people, and indeed Native people in general. Journey also characterized the early Anabaptist/Mennonite people.

So I have entitled my message this morning “Journey of Faith,” and I would like to reflect with you on the faith journeys of three groups of people to challenge our thinking.

The Children of Israel

In Genesis 12 we read, “The Lord said to Abram, ‘Leave your native land, your relatives, and your father’s home, and go to a country that I am going to show you. 2 I will give you many descendants, and they will become a great nation. I will bless you and make your name famous, so that you will be a blessing.’”

God called Abram to go on a journey. It was a journey of faith. He left the land of his birth. He did not know where God would lead him, but he went by faith. His journey had many twists and turns

and included difficult times, times of failure and mistakes, times of uncertainty, and times of God doing miracles (like Sarai becoming pregnant when she was beyond child-bearing years). But God was faithful and kept his promise, and from Abram God made a great nation, a great tribal people.

Hebrews 11 tells us, “8 It was faith that made Abraham obey when God called him to go out to a country which God had promised to give him. He left his own country without knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he lived as a foreigner in the country that God had promised him. He lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who received the same promise from God. 10 For Abraham was waiting for the city which God has designed and built, the city with permanent foundations.”

A deep trust in God and faith that God would keep his promises kept Abraham and his descendants, the people of Israel, throughout their journey here on this earth. And as we see in verse 10, there was a constant hope for God’s divinely designed, permanent city. The children of Israel realized that their journey on earth was only temporary, and they were looking for a city in the life beyond.

The Cheyenne People

Another group of people that I want to reflect on is the Cheyenne people. I have had the privilege of living with the Cheyenne people for 41 years, both in Oklahoma and Montana. What I know about the Cheyenne people comes from what people have told me and what I have read about in books, books written by Cheyenne people and also by non-Cheyenne people. I do not claim to be an expert on Cheyenne history and way of life, but what I have heard and read intrigues me. The journey of the Cheyenne people throughout their history, like that of Abraham, has been a journey of faith. It has been a journey with many changes, many challenges, many disappointments, and many setbacks. Yet always there was a strong faith in Creator God Ma’heo’o, who had created them and who sustained them in the complexities of everyday living. It is interesting to me that Cheyenne history includes a creation story.

In his book *Cheyenne Memories*, John Stands in Timber tells about the Cheyenne story of creation as follows: “Among my grandparents’ relatives were two old women, Yellow Haired Woman and White Necklace. When I was small, they used to tell us

how the world was created, and when I returned from school in 1905 they were still alive, so I visited them to write the story down.

“They said the Creator took dirt or mud and made a person, and blew breath into this person’s mouth and he became alive. They did not remember what happened right after he was made. But after a time there were more people, and the Creator taught them how to live, using small animals for their food, and wild fruit” (Yale University Press, 1967).

Many Native people also have flood stories.

Cheyenne history also tells of life before its people came to North America. John Stands in Timber chronicles the tradition of the Cheyenne inhabiting “another country, where great waters were all around them. They thought it could have been an island in the ocean. They lived mostly on fish and birds there, and they had a hard time as they were often hungry. But they were able to travel, and at last they came to a place where they found large animals. That encouraged them to go on farther to find a better country where they could live.”

Many historians, both Native and non-Native, believe Indian people came up the Asian coast and

crossed over on the Bering Strait and came onto the North American continent. About 15 years ago I attended a Native Christian Conference near Santa Fe, New Mexico, where I met Bold Baater, a Native Christian man from Mongolia. He said that the Native people in Mongolia believe that the Indian people in North America are their direct descendents. All of this suggests that Native people had contact with Judaism (and perhaps Christianity) from earlier years. Many Cheyenne customs, both religious and cultural, have similarities to the Old Testament laws and customs.

After coming to this new land, Cheyenne people continued to migrate, through Canada into the Great Lakes region and then onto the Great Plains. This often meant change and adaptation. Much of their migration was due to the encroachment of the white people. Often these migrations created animosity between the Cheyenne and other tribes.

Cheyenne history tells of a great Cheyenne prophet, Sweet Medicine, who came, gave the people laws, and taught them how to live. Before his death, Sweet Medicine prophesied about the coming of the white man, as recorded in *Cheyenne Memories*: “There is a time coming, though, when many things will change. Strangers called Earth Men will appear

among you. Their skins are light-colored, and their ways are powerful. They will clip their hair short and speak no Indian tongue. Follow nothing that these Earth Men do, but keep your own ways that I have taught you as long as you can. ... But at last you will not remember. Your ways will change. You will leave your religion for something new. You will lose respect for your leaders and start quarreling with one another. You will lose track of your relations and marry women from your own families. You will take after the Earth Men’s ways and forget good things by which you have lived and in the end become worse than crazy. I am sorry to say these things, but I have seen them, and you will find that they come true.”

And Sweet Medicine’s prophecies did come true and the white people came and the Mennonites came. But, God was here among the Cheyenne people long before the coming of the white missionaries. Cheyenne people have always known that they were only journeying through this land for a time and that they



(Left to right) Teresa Murray and Norma Fisher



Dion Henry

would return to the Creator. As one of the Cheyenne warrior songs says, "My friends, only the stones stay on earth forever. Use your best ability."

The Anabaptists/Mennonites

A third group of people that I want to reflect on is the Mennonites. The story of the early Anabaptists, like Abraham and the people of Israel and the Cheyenne people, was a journey of faith. The early Anabaptist movement grew out of the Reformation in the 16th century. Due to corruption in the established church, priests and peasants alike left the church to form new

movements. First there was Luther and then Zwingli. A number of those who were part of the Zwingli movement felt that his reform did not go far enough, especially in the area of voluntary church membership, infant baptism, and discipleship. Out of this concern, Felix Manz, Conrad Grebel, Georg Blaurock, and others met and rebaptized each other.

After these early leaders had been called to a debate over these issues by the city council in Zurich, Switzerland in 1525, we read this in *The Mennonite Story*: "They said to themselves, 'We must obey God rather than men' (Acts 5:29), and met secretly on the evening of January 21, apparently in the home of Felix Manz' mother in the Neustadt-Gasse near the Grossmünster. In this meeting Grebel baptized Georg Blaurock, whereupon Blaurock baptized several others present. That was the birth of Anabaptism, the earliest free church."

From this humble yet revolutionary beginning Anabaptism spread through many countries in Europe, especially Switzerland, Germany, Prussia, and the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, Menno Simons became a great leader among the Anabaptists, and thus they became known as Mennonites. Throughout the early years many of the Mennonites were persecuted and died for their faith. Most often they would have to flee for their lives, and as they did they spread the good news of Jesus and the freedom that he brought to them. Due to persecution and the desire for religious freedom, Mennonites came to North America, home of the Native people. In Europe and North America, the Mennonites became the "quiet in the land," living out their faith but not being vocal about it.

During the mid-1800s renewal began to sweep the Mennonite Church in this country, especially under the leadership of John F. Funk and John Oberholzer. Under the leadership of Oberholzer, the General Conference Mennonite Church was formed in 1860, and 20 years later, in 1880, the General Conference responded to the invitation to send teachers to the school for Indian children at Darlington, Oklahoma. Samuel S. and Susanna Haury were the first ones to come. From there, churches were begun among the Arapaho and Cheyenne. Rodolphe Petter came in 1891 and began doing linguistic work, which resulted in a Cheyenne Bible and other related helps. He is often recognized for his significant contribution to the Cheyenne language cause.

These early missionaries came with the good news of Jesus Christ to a people who already had a strong faith in the Creator, Ma'heo'o. This good news brought a deeper understanding of the love of God and the forgiveness that he came to earth to bring from our Creator. And for receiving this good news, many Native Christians have given deep thanks. As Ted Rising Sun used to say, "I am eternally grateful that the missionaries brought us the good news of Jesus."

However, we must also acknowledge that many mistakes were made. Often the strong faith of the Cheyenne people was not acknowledged, and, even though often done unintentionally, sometimes missionaries became involved in destroying the way of life of the Cheyenne. The coming of different denominations often brought division among the Cheyenne people. Although there were a number of similarities between the Cheyenne and the Mennonites, there were also differences. It is interesting to me that God brought together the German Mennonites, who were very frugal, and the Cheyenne people, who were a sharing people. Cheyenne values included generosity, sharing, honesty, respect, and purity.

Similarities among Three Peoples

As I think of these three groups of people I see many similarities in their journeys.

1. **They were people of faith.** It was a deep sense of God's presence and faithfulness that sustained them through the challenges of life.
2. **They were people on the move.** Whether it was due to persecution, or the desire for freedom and preservation of their way of life or the need to protect themselves from the coming of other

people, their lives involved change.

3. **They experienced great persecution and suffering.**
4. **They were people with a desire for peace.** Even though the Cheyenne people have sometimes been called “the fighting Cheyenne,” their history is full of stories and incidents where leaders made trips to meet with the U.S. government to ask to be allowed to live in peace. One of those was Chief Black Kettle, who was attacked after a promise of peace on the banks of the Washita River in 1868. The early Anabaptists believed that following Jesus involved living a peaceful life and abstaining from violence.
5. **They were people who loved the land, the earth.**

It seems to me that many times we did not capitalize and build on these similarities, but instead emphasized our differences. My hope and prayer is that we are learning.

The Challenge for Us

As we have reflected on the life and faith of these three groups of people, I suggest there is a fourth group of people that we need to consider. That is you and I. We are also on a journey, a journey through this life that our Creator has given to us.

It is a journey of faith, faith in a God who keeps his promises. Hebrews 11:6 says, “No one can please God without faith, for whoever comes to God must have faith that God exists and rewards those who seek him.” Each day brings with it opportunities and choices. Without faith we cannot honor our Creator as we journey through this life. With faith we can do as Abraham did and look “for the city which God has designed and built, the city with permanent foundations.” And with each day we have God’s promise that “I am with you always.”

Remember the words of the Cheyenne warrior song, “My friends, only the stones stay on this earth forever. Use your best ability.”

And I close with a Cheyenne spiritual song, song #124 in *Tsesé-Ma’heone-Nemeotôtse (Cheyenne Spiritual Songs)* (eds. Wayne Leman & David Graber, Faith and Life Press, 1982):

God, look upon us!
Be merciful to us!
Your name we carry.
Bring us through even though it is difficult!
By your divine power we are victors.
Be merciful to us! *AMEN*



Conference participants join the dance in front of the traditional willow shade created for the mass sessions at the Frisco Center. Large photo, front row (left to right): Dorothy Nickel Friesen (holding Lily Hart), John Janzen, Kimberly Schmidt; small photo (left to right): Marie Big Back Littlewolf, Maretha Risingsun Charette, Stanley Bohn, Louise Risingsun Fisher





North Newton, Kansas sculptor John Gaeddert presents a carved buffalo head to Lawrence Hart. Hart accepted on behalf of the Cheyenne Cultural Center and the Cheyenne people.



Erica Littlewolf

"Darlington Journey"



Left to right, foreground: Richard Friesen, Dorothy Nickel Friesen, James Juhnke

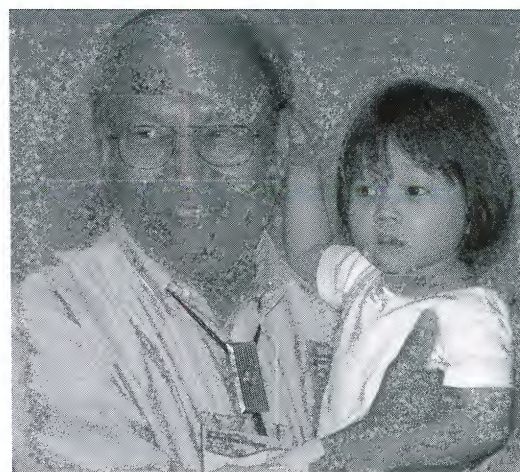
(Right) Dr. Sherry Hutt, National NAGPRA Program Manager, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior

(Below) Return to the Earth burial site dedication at Cheyenne Cultural Center



Dr. Donald L. Fixico, Distinguished Foundation Professor of History, Arizona State University, conference keynote speaker





Lawrence Hart and granddaughter Lily Hart

Western District Conference minister Dorothy Nickel Friesen (third from right) and Mennonite Mission Network representative Marty Bender (far right) transfer deeds of Seiling Mennonite Church and Cantonment Cemetery properties to Trustees of the Oklahoma Fellowship of Indian Mennonite Churches. Left to right: Joyce M. Twins, Wilma Redbird, Ramona Old Bear Welch, Friesen, Lawrence Hart, Bender.

conference scrapbook



Left to right: Louise Risingsun Fisher and DeLores Little Bear Hart



Left to right: Joel Alderfer and Dr. Clyde Ellis examine an 1889 Cheyenne baptismal memento.



Hesston (Kans.) College student participants relax between sessions.



Lois and Robert Kreider

History through a different lens

History can be deceptively simple. At one level, it is very straightforward and clear. We know when events took place, who was involved in them, and what has happened since. But it becomes complicated very quickly as we look at the meaning of events and explain why they were or were not important or assign responsibility. The lens of time refocuses our understanding of the past, and what seemed so obvious at one time appears more complex at a later time.

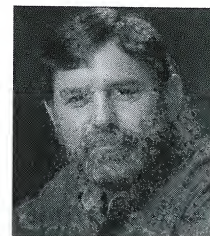
The relationship between whites and Native Americans illustrates this point very nicely. For those of us who remember how our history was presented before 1960, we heard the story of westward expansion told in triumphalist terms. White settlers pushed west into a land that was virtually empty, occupied only by a few Native Americans and buffalo. The pioneers were strong risk takers who faced hostile natives, harsh weather, and plenty of hardship. Native Americans lived a life that had a tinge of the romantic but was ultimately out of touch with modernization and progress. Their unfortunate demise was unavoidable in the face of the westward push of civilization.

The story changed after 1960 as historians looked at this history from new perspectives. For many, it became a story of genocide, in which a Native American culture was buried beneath the onslaught of white imperialism and arrogance. Native Americans took on the hue of honored people who lived in close harmony with nature and each other, and whites became the villains.

At the conference in Clinton, Oklahoma, I saw evidence that all of these interpretations have some truth—as well as error—and none tell the entire story. A visit to the Washita massacre site and the Return to the Earth project reminded me of the cruel destruction of lives and culture. Hearing about Mennonite missionaries who moved to Oklahoma only a few years after they had settled in Kansas after a long migration from Russia helped me appreciate their determined faith. The ceremonies of gift-giving that are so crucial to Native American cultures opened my eyes to a side of Native American culture I had heard about but never experienced.

In my mind, the value of this conference was in the experience. Being there and seeing, tasting, hearing, and participating made history come alive in a new way. After such an event, the world is never as simple as it was before.

—Franklin Yoder



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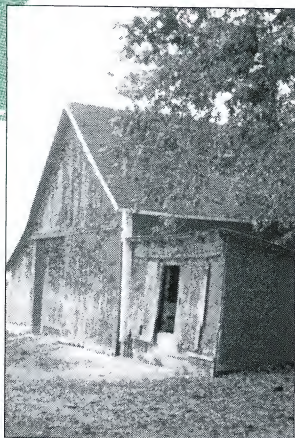
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Minding
Mennonite
Memory

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In this issue



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Page 8: Three college writers have been awarded prizes in the John Horsch Essay Contest, including Elizabeth Miller, whose first-place essay treats evangelist D.W. Moody.



Page 9: The Dutch Zuid-Limburg congregation in the city of Heerlen, formed in 1934, confronted German occupation in World War II. Gerlof Homan brings the tale of this believing community to life through their everyday gestures of survival and quiet acts of heroism.



Back page: War touches all of us, Franklin Yoder writes, even pacifist Mennonites. War is unpredictable—it can divide or overwhelm us, but, through grace, it can strengthen our faith.

On the cover: House on the John G. Miller farm in Shippshewana, Indiana, where author Al Albrecht performed farm deferment work during World War II. Farmer Miller created this watercolor image.

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Historical
Committee



Fleeting details and untold stories in the epic of World War II

Sometimes a minor detail illuminates the larger story. In this issue, Gerlof Homan reveals such a moment in the story of the Dutch Mennonite Zuid-Limburg church in the city of Heerlen, whose congregation from 1940 to 1944 faced German occupation and war. After liberation, a Baptist Army chaplain received permission to conduct services in the sanctuary for American troops stationed in Heerlen, one of whom later married a daughter of the Dutch congregation. Dutch guests present at the bilingual ceremony must have done a double take, Homan writes, when the American chaplain invited the groom to kiss the bride—“simply not a Dutch custom.”

In the congregational story Homan shares here, that kiss is one disarming moment in a more somber tale. The war brought forced labor and food shortages to Heerlen, as elsewhere. Some members of the small congregation were imprisoned. Some joined in resistance activity. Some sheltered Jews in their homes at great risk. The church building was damaged by shells and the parsonage ransacked. Yet as the war's turmoil came to an end, the Heerlen congregation opened their worship space to the Baptist chaplain (who replaced their communion wine with grape juice), and their church study on Saturdays to a U.S. Army rabbi, Jewish soldiers and local Jews whose synagogue had been wrecked. The cross-cultural wedding kiss between Sergeant Willis John and Catharina Borgwat is a fleeting detail in a grander, more momentous story, but it highlights a congregation's hospitable attitude, dignified survival and hopeful outlook.

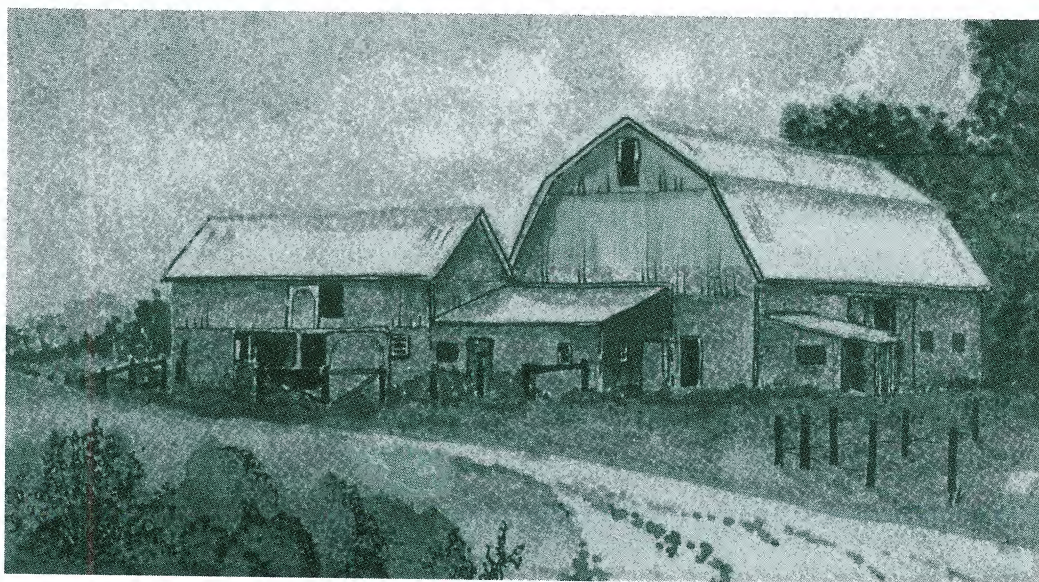
Stories that have been overlooked may similarly shine new light on long-established topics. Al Albrecht turns his attention this month to men who were given farm deferment during World War II. Albrecht, writing from his own experience as a farm deferee, informs us of the program's design and shares responses to a survey of Mennonite deferees. Neither enlisting in combat nor explicitly pacifist Civilian Public Service, some Mennonite farm deferees felt they occupied an ambiguous, sometimes invisible position. More Mennonite

men accepted farm deferment than received CO status, yet relatively little analysis has been given to the former program. Albrecht's article suggests a number of avenues for further exploration.

Finally, a bit of editorial housekeeping. With this issue my interim year of *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* editorship comes to a close. I count it a privilege to have worked with the *Bulletin's* authors and staff. Ruth Schrock, John Sharp, Andrea Buller Golden, John Thiesen, Dennis Stoesz and the Historical Committee provided fine support. Don Garber, Frank Yoder and designer Dee Birkey have been mainstays. All have my thanks. Now hats off and best wishes to Rich Preheim, incoming Historical Committee Interim Director.

—Susan Fisher Miller





Barn of the John G. Miller farm in Shipshewana, Indiana, where author Albrecht performed farm deferment work during World War II. Farmer Miller created this watercolor image.

Source: Al Albrecht

Farm deferments during World War II

by Al Albrecht

Author Al Albrecht worked on the John G. Miller farm, Shipshewana, Indiana from May 1942 to November 1945 under the farm deferment classification during World War II.

The story of men and women in the U.S. military of the Second World War has been told, as has the story of Civilian Public Service. But the Mennonite and Amish young men who served their time as farm-deferred workers has not been told.

After posting announcements in *The Mennonite*, *Mennonite Weekly Review*, and three Elkhart County newspapers that we wished to correspond with men who had farm deferments during WWII, we received responses from 51 men. This study thus examines as its representative sample a relatively small number of all U.S. farm deferees.

It should be noted that the total number of farm deferees (those with II-C classification) from the membership of 30 Mennonite and related conferences was 8,124 as recorded by the Peace Problems Committee of Mennonite Central Committee. Of this number, 3,588 came from the 12 conferences of the then-called Old Mennonites, 1,659 came from the five conferences of the General Conference Mennonites, and 1,064 from the Old Order Amish. The total drafted (I-A regular military, 2,806; I-A-O noncombatant, 1,026; and IV-E conscientious objectors, 3,245), however, from all of the Mennonite and related conferences was 7,077—1,047 fewer than the deferred.¹ From all denominations throughout the United States, and including the non-affiliated and unclassified, 11,906 chose Civilian Public Service assignments, according to the Directory of Civilian Public Service.² There apparently is no national record of the number of farm deferees.

If there were 8,124 Mennonite and related deferees, why so few responses to our notices? At the time of WWII the men were 18 to 25 years old when they registered for the draft. These men now are in their low to mid-80s. Indeed, many have died. Another reason for the low response is that members of 12 of the 30 conferences are generally not readers of *The Mennonite*, *Mennonite Weekly Review*, or the Elkhart County



Deferment program host farmer John G. Miller photographed at his home in 1988. Credit: Al Albrecht

newspapers. A third factor that accounts for the low response is that after 60 or more years memories have dimmed. The deferrees may now be unsure of the facts or are not interested. Furthermore, MCC and its Peace Problems Committee apparently did not consider the farm deferment program of much importance, for the committee analyzed the three draft classifications by correlating the young men's draft status with their standing in their church, their level of education, their occupation, and their age, as well as correlating their reasons for selecting their type of service with the same four factors. The Peace Problems Committee made no such analysis of or any observation about the farm-deferred men, though it had determined the number of deferred at the time it collected the information on the three draft classifications.³ Did the committee reflect the general attitude of the churches, or does this omission suggest that the MCC executives considered the program unimportant? Also, Guy Hersberger in his book *War, Peace, and Nonresistance* does not refer to the farm deferment program of WWII, though he does note the farm furlough of WWI.⁴

World War II began when the German army marched into Poland on September 1, 1939, and then with a blitzkrieg soon controlled all of Poland. Soon thereafter Germany controlled countries on its eastern borders, and subsequently defeated France and threatened to invade England. The U.S. Congress, alarmed by Germany's takeover of European countries, passed the Burke-Wadsworth Act in September 1940, thereby establishing its first peacetime draft.

As Hitler continued to bomb England and especially London, the U.S. Congress passed the Lend Lease Act in March 1941.⁵ This legislation pledged the United States' unlimited support of England in its fight with Germany, and de facto entered the United States into World War II.

On December 8, 1941, Congress declared war on Japan, which had bombed Pearl Harbor the day before. On December 11 Germany and Italy declared war on the United States, and later the same day Congress declared war on them. Now that the United States was so completely engaged in the conflagration, Congress immediately mobilized all dimensions of the military and defense forces, including the production of food. The Department of Agriculture and the War Powers Commission were given the authority to supply sufficient agriculture products for the country. The Tydings amendment to the Selective Service Act established a farm deferment program and provided guidelines for draft boards to make these assignments.⁶

At that time, according to the 1940 census, six million farms were in operation in the United States. Nearly nine-tenths of farm income, however, was earned by one-half of those

farms.⁷ This indicates that three million farms were poor producers and thus available to be enticed to be more productive for the war effort. This created a potential need for more farm laborers.

By 1942 the National Education Association, recognizing the pressure for farm laborers, expressed its concern, urging that young people, juniors and seniors in high school, should not have their education disrupted by being required to "assist in harvesting crops." It urged further that programs be developed to "dovetail school activities" and farm labor "with no curtailment of school terms."⁸

On February 6, 1941, President Roosevelt, in response to a delegation of Mennonites, Brethren, and Friends who asked for an exemption for conscience sake from military service, authorized Dr. Clarence A. Dykstra, director of Selective Service, to designate work of national importance for conscientious objectors.⁹ To this end Selective Service established the Civilian Public Service program, popularly known as CPS.¹⁰

Thus, conscientious objectors had a choice in rejecting military service—CPS or a farm deferment. According to the responses of the 51, a few had to convince their draft board of their peace position, while others reported that they registered as COs, but this was not a factor that their boards considered in assigning their deferments. Indeed, three noted that they never confronted their boards, as the arrangement for deferment was made informally with a draft board member and the designated farmer.

The farm deferment program was entirely a government program in contrast to the Civilian Public Service program, for which the U.S. government provided housing and equipment, with the Historic Peace Churches providing the administrative and educational programs.

Of the 51 men of this study, 33 received deferments to their home farms, and thus continued to enjoy their mothers' cooking and family activities. Thirteen received assignment to their home communities and only five to communities a considerable distance from home, one as far as from his home in Nebraska to Mountain Lake, Minnesota.

All except one of the 51 attended worship services at Mennonite churches during their deferment, thereby enjoying social and spiritual support without interruption.

Forty-three deferrees worked for farmers who supported a conscientious-objection-to-war position and eight worked for those who did not. However, a full half of deferrees claimed they faced negative responses to their deferment, despite



sympathetic farmers, due attitudes they experienced in the surrounding community.

To the question, “Did you have second thoughts about making an effective peace witness as a deferee?” 43 answered that they had no second thoughts about their decision. Two failed to answer the question. Six, however, were somewhat uncomfortable with their farm deferment. One deferee answered, “I finally realized that the rationale for giving farm deferments was that it was more important in the total war effort to stay on the farm. In the end I requested that I be classified IV-E,” the CO classification. Another young man, recognizing that to remain undisturbed in his home community made no visible stand as a conscientious objector, sought counsel from his pastor. After listening to the young man’s concern that his deferment failed to demonstrate that he was a CO, the pastor advised him, nevertheless, to remain on the farm so as not to become an added burden to the church. A few indicated that they had questioned their decision a bit but gave no explanation. One deferee, however, wrote that he “never thought it as an effective” witness for peace as CPS.

A variety of reasons were given for seeking deferment. Eleven stated that they were needed on their home farm for reasons of their father’s poor health or in one case a father’s demise. Others reported these reasons: “I was buying the farm.” “I stayed on the farm so I could go to medical school after the war. I feared if I didn’t I would be drafted into the military.” “My draft board encouraged me to stay on the farm.” “It seemed the best place for me.” “I remained on the farm to support my wife and two children.”

Approximately 60 years after their deferments, 46 responded to the question, “Was deferment the right or wrong peace position?” For 44 it remained the correct thing for them to do. Two of the 51 believed that they made a mistake in accepting a farm deferment. One maintained it was right for him as he witnessed for peace, since the people for whom he worked were not pacifists.

Only three of 31 who responded to “Did your church acknowledge your deferment as a witness for peace?” said yes, and 23 answered with a no. Other deferees noted that their church encouraged them to seek the II-C classification, but did not acknowledge it as a peace witness.

In comparing the importance of farm deferments with CPS, a deferee wrote that producing food was of more value than much of CPS work. Another wrote that farm deferment was important, as it kept him out of CPS. Yet another said the deferment was more important than CPS, as it kept his family farm in operation. Sixteen deferees believed that their

deferment was not as important as CPS, while 24 insisted it was as or more important. Their answers did not clearly distinguish, however, whether it was more or less important as a peace witness or as a means of producing food for the country.

In response to the question, “Did your farm deferment interrupt your plans?” two wrote that it delayed their marriage and one that for him it delayed both college and marriage. Eight reported that it delayed their college studies, while 35 noted that it did not interrupt or delay either. Two reported that during the time of deferment they matured and came to recognize that they should begin seminary studies.

Some of the deferees continued their education beyond high school after completing their deferred assignment. Twenty reported that they attended a college or a university, but 25 did not. Having been on the farm prior to deferment, 23 chose to farm or work in agricultural-related industries at the conclusion of their deferment. Six became teachers, nine entered the ministry, one banking, and one the construction industry.

How do the 8,124 Anabaptists farm deferees figure in the nationwide farm deferment program of World War II? Between 1940 and 1943 farmers throughout the United States lost 3.6 million farm workers to the armed forces and war industries, according to Jacob J. Kaufman.¹¹ Thus there existed a great need for farm workers, more so in some areas of the country than in others. By July 1, 1943, almost 1.5 million young men had been deferred on the basis of the Tydings amendment.

After many in war-related industries, such as construction, were no longer needed, they discovered Selective Service as an avenue to shift into agricultural deferments. Indeed, from January to April 1943, approximately 110,000 made such a move, prompting Kaufman to denounce the program as a system to dodge the draft.¹²

With 1.5 million farm deferees throughout the nation, the 8,124 deferees of the Mennonite and related conferences made only a blip on the national screen. On the other hand, according to the report of the Peace Problems Committee, 3,245 spent time in CPS during WWII, 4,779 fewer than those deferred to farms.¹³ If all of the 11,906 CPS men and all of the farm-deferred COs (number not known) had chosen prison instead of registering for the draft, surely they would have caused an international stir.

Finally, looking back 60 years and removed from the emotional milieu of the time, we must ask a philosophical question: Was farm deferment the right choice for these young men? What is the nature of the Christian’s responsibility to the state? Edward Yoder, once a Goshen

College Bible professor and then editor at Mennonite Publishing House, considered this question in the booklet *The Christian and Conscription*. With conscription, to paraphrase Yoder, it is the state that claims individual men and trains them for its own use and service. But for the CO Christian who follows the teachings of Jesus, military training and service is morally wrong.¹⁴ Thus, the Christian needs to decide what his response should be to the state's demands.

To bring into focus the state-conscientious objector relationship and provide criteria for making decisions, Yoder posed these questions:

1. Does the state have the right to take over an individual citizen by directing and controlling and conditioning his life?
2. Does the state know better than the individual himself how he should occupy his time and expand his energies for a year?
3. Is the state so wise and competent that all persons of a certain age and class should surrender to it their bodies and minds for a given period of time?
4. Is the state authorized in any way so to take over completely responsibility for the individual person's life?¹⁵

The farm deferrees were not, of course, subjected to state control to the extent that the men of the military or the men in CPS were. The farm deferment program did, however, demand that young men, for a number of years, work on farms to ensure sufficient food for the military. Congressional legislation granted the War Powers Commission the responsibility to acquire the manpower to achieve its goal with the help of local draft boards. The legislation did not say raise food for the community, but for the war effort. Thus, the farm-deferred CO was not taking as clear a stand for peace as the person in CPS or, indeed, those who chose prison rather than register for the draft. So here we have to deal with a question of Christian ethics.

In his book *War, Peace, and Nonresistance*, Guy Hershberger raised the question thus: "Can the nonresistant farmer engage in farming for the production of food in wartime?" He answered by first maintaining that the best policy would be "to produce nothing which is war materiel or which is designed specifically for contribution to the war effort." Then he wrote that there was "no reason a nonresistant Christian should not grow food in wartime." Finally, he reasoned that since the army is fed first and then civilians get the remainder, the nonresistant farmer should grow food to avoid contributing to a civilian food shortage.¹⁶

It seems that with this reasoning author Hershberger may have unintentionally admitted that the farmer and his

employees were in the front line to support the military. Indeed, the War Powers Commission was mandated by Congress to supply sufficient agricultural products for the country. More specifically, it was designed to achieved this with the Tydings amendment that established the farm deferment program.

Austin Regier, a Kansas farm boy, struggled with this hazy position. He reported to a CPS camp in Colorado but soon asked to be transferred to perform work in a mental hospital after he and fellow CPSers were required to thin sugar beets on surrounding farms, for they knew that sugar was an important ingredient in making explosives for munitions. Upon requesting Regier's assignment to serve in a mental hospital, his draft board sent him to work in the Kalamazoo (Michigan) Mental Hospital. But he continued to question his CPS status, believing he should make a more visible stand for peace.¹⁷

Later, when the Selective Service Act of 1948 was passed, Regier was teaching economics at the University of Minnesota. After much thought and against the counsel of his church and parents he decided not to register. Upon informing his department chairman of his decision, he was immediately dismissed.

In a letter of September 25, 1948, Regier told his parents that he had sent letters to President Truman and Senator Capper and Representative Rees (Kansas legislators of his home district) that he was refusing to register with Selective Service.¹⁸ Regier reasoned: War is wrong. Preparations for war-making are wrong. Since conscription is preparing for war, registering for conscription is wrong. On January 10, 1949, a federal court in Minneapolis, Minnesota, sentenced Regier to prison for a year and a day.¹⁹

More recently some Mennonite young men have refused to register upon becoming 18 years old as required by law. In the 1980s, a Goshen College student stood to lose his state grant money for tuition for refusing to register. *The Mennonite* carried the account of Jason Shenk, a student at Earlham College, who asked himself, "What does it mean to pursue peace and justice in our daily lives?" For Jason it meant that he would not register with the U.S. Selective Service System. Because of his refusal to register, he lost his eligibility for government grants and loans. Through his church, Eighth Street Mennonite in Goshen, Indiana, however, he received financial aid from the Student Aid Fund for Nonregistrants provided by Mennonite Church USA to match his loss of government grants and loans. This fund was created by the former Mennonite Church in 1983. In 2005, this fund provided \$23,000 in loans to four men and \$5,900 in grants to three men.²⁰

So what is the difference between the young men of the 1940s

and the young men of the early 21st century? Today the young men are better educated, more sophisticated. Most are from urban areas, where they developed a good measure of self-confidence. In contrast, most of the 1940s youth came from rural areas and were thus less aggressive and less likely to challenge the status quo.

The Historic Peace Churches have also changed. Today they teach their young people more effectively, for many employ youth ministers who provide group activities that help the young people join more fully in the life of their churches. This helps them deal with moral issues much earlier in life than the young men of the 1940s. This study does not intend to fault the farm deferee for his decision. His elders and church leaders undoubtedly remembered the terrible experiences of the COs during World War I and saw the farm deferment program as a valid alternative to CPS or prison, not realizing that the farm deferment legislation established the farm deferment program in support of the war. Undoubtedly, all involved—parents, church leaders and the young men—made their decisions with the best of intentions based on their understanding of the Scriptures and the demands of the U.S. government. 🌿

Al Albrecht, Goshen, Indiana, is professor of communication emeritus at Goshen College, where he taught and coached debate for many years. He is a writer and book reviewer and remains active in a variety of organizations.



1. Mennonite Church USA Archives, Mennonite Central Committee Collection. File: Draft Census Group Summaries, 1945, IX-12 (#1). The Peace Problems Committee of Mennonite Central Committee gathered statistical draft and deferred information from these Mennonite and related conferences:
Old Mennonite Conferences
Lancaster
Franconia
Ohio

Indiana-Michigan
Missouri-Kansas
Illinois
Pacific
Southwestern Pennsylvania
Virginia
Washington County and Franklin County
Iowa-Nebraska
Dakota-Montana
General Conference
Western
Northern
Pacific
Middle
Eastern
Mennonite Brethren Conferences
Southern
Central
Pacific
Central Conference
Mennonite Brethren in Christ
Church of God in Christ
Conservative Amish Mennonite
Old Order Amish
Defenseless
Hutterian Brethren
Evangelical Mennonite Brethren
Krimmer Mennonite Brethren
Old Order Mennonite.

2. *Directory of Civilian Public Service, May 1941 to March 1947* (The National Board for Religious Objectors, 941 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, D.C.).
3. Mennonite Church USA Archives.
4. Guy Hershberger, *War, Peace, and Nonresistance* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1944), 119.
5. Michael Martin and Leonard Gelber, *Dictionary of American History* (Totowa, N.J.: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1965), 352.
6. Jacob J. Kaufman, "Farm Labor During World War II," *Journal of Farm Economics*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (February 1940), 134.
7. Wheeler McMillen, "Production and Patriotism" (speech, March 20, 1941), *Vital Speeches of the Day* (May 1, 1941, Vol. 7, issue 14), 441.
8. *The Journal of the National Education Association*, Vol. 31, No. 6 (September 1942), A-93.
9. Melvin Gingerich, *Service for Peace* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1949), 40.
10. *Ibid.*, 52.
11. Kaufman, *Journal of Farm Economics*, 131.
12. *Ibid.*, 136.
13. Mennonite Church USA Archives.
14. Edward Yoder and Don Smucker, *The Christian and Conscription* (Akron, Pa.: Mennonite Central Committee, 1945), 32.
15. *Ibid.*, 35.
16. Hershberger, *War, Peace, and Nonresistance*, 369-370.
17. Austin Regier with Susan Miller Balzer and Raymond Regier, *The Courage of Conviction: The Correspondence of a Conscientious Objector* (North Newton, Kans.: Raymond Regier, 2000), 24, 25.
18. *Ibid.*, 144.
19. *Ibid.*, 179.
20. *The Mennonite* (Nov. 15, 2005), 22.

2006 John Horsch Essay contest winners

Class I—Graduate School and Seminary (No Prizes Awarded)

Class II—Undergraduate College and University



First Place: Elizabeth Miller, Goshen College, Goshen, Ind.
"Moody, Fundamentalism, and Mennonites: The Struggle for Particularity and Engagement in Illinois Mennonite Churches"

Second Place: John P.R. Eicher, Goshen College, Goshen, Ind.
"Suspicious Minds: Fundamentalism and the First Mennonite

Elizabeth Miller Church of Berne, Indiana"

Third Place: Scott S. Janzen, Bethel College, North Newton, Kan.
"A Church Divided: Fundamentalism and Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson, Nebraska"

Class III—High School (No Prizes Awarded)

Judges:

Rachel Waltner Goossen, Associate Professor of History, Washburn University
Walter Sawatsky, Professor of Church History & Mission, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary
Mark Metzler Sawin, Associate Professor of History, Eastern Mennonite University

A Dutch Mennonite congregation in World War II: Zuid-Limburg*

by Gerlof Homan

Although a general account of the Dutch Mennonite experience in World War II has been written,¹ much more can and should be said about each congregation's struggle during the ordeal of the German occupation and war. Such a task will not be easy, as most congregations did not keep records. This is an attempt to tell the story of one congregation: Zuid-Limburg [South Limburg], located in the city of Heerlen, the Netherlands. Because of the paucity of materials, however, it is an incomplete story.²

Most Dutch Mennonite congregations are located in the provinces of Friesland and North Holland. One will not find many in the area below the Meuse and Waal rivers, which traditionally has been a predominantly Roman Catholic region. However, in 1926 Mennonites in the village of Treebeek, located east of the city of Heerlen, began holding meetings. Heerlen is located in the southern part of the Province of Limburg, only a few miles from the German border, and in 1940 had a population of about 50,000. It was the center of an important coal mine industry. The city can trace its origins back to Roman times and is located in an area known for its scenic beauty.

In November 1934 Mennonites formed a congregation in that city and five years later built a fine meeting place. It became known as the *Doopsgezinde Gemeente* [Mennonite Congregation], Zuid-Limburg. In 1940 it had some 80 members, many of whom came from surrounding communities. Their first pastor was Simon M. A. Daalder, who played an important role in establishing the congregation and who also served the newly established Mennonite congregation in Eindhoven, located some 50 miles northwest of Heerlen. But Anton Eduard Dinger, chief engineer of the state-owned coal mines building facilities, also played a very important role in establishing the Heerlen congregation. Dinger was born in 1888 in Batavia (now Djakarta), the capital of the former Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia). He studied at the Delft Technical University and became an engineer at the state-owned coal mines buildings



*A Dutch language version of this article appeared in *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen*, Nieuwe Reeks, 31 (2005): 263-276.



Anton Eduard Dinger (right) is decorated by Prince Bernard.

Photo: Archives DK2L

in 1920. Under his direction many of the buildings and mine workers' homes were built.

Dinger was also very active in community affairs and widely respected by Catholics and non-Catholics. The Dinger family had gathered considerable wealth in the sugar industry in Indonesia. Anton used part of his inherited wealth to promote Heerlen's

general well-being. In recognition of his community services, Dinger became in 1930 an Officer of the Order of Orange Nassau and shortly before his death in 1952 a Knight of the Order of the Netherlands Lion. The latter was given to him in person by Prince Bernard, husband of then Queen Juliana.

His grandson describes Dinger as a "devout" Christian. This devotion was expressed in his love of local Mennonites, to whom he donated a considerable sum to finance the building of the new congregation's meeting place. Later he donated the beautiful stained-glass window to the church, while his sister, Caroline, donated the organ. Dinger also often served as chairman of the church board. In spite of much public recognition Dinger remained a modest and unassuming person.³

Pastor Daalder stayed until 1942, when he was succeeded by pastor Theodoms van Veen (1915-1981). Zuid-Limburg was Van Veen's first congregation. He was 27 when he assumed his congregational duties in Heerlen. Van Veen has been described as a man of integrity and a compassionate, caring, and "warm religious person" who empathized with others in their misery. Van Veen was married to Hermine (Mies) Meijer who played an important role in his wartime ministry. Their marriage was for them a source of joy. In 1945 the Van Veen's had three small children.⁴

Heerlen was one of the first Dutch cities to feel the brunt of the German invasion of May 1940. Most of the Province of Limburg, located very close to the border, fell to the German army on May 10, the first day of the war. During the next four and one-half years Heerlen, like other Dutch communities, suffered under the Nazi yoke. Its inhabitants endured forced labor in the German war economy, suffered food and other shortages, witnessed the rounding up of Jewish citizens, and lived in daily terror of the dreaded Gestapo and other forms of Nazi brutality.⁵

Heerlen did not suffer more than many other Dutch cities. Especially in Limburg various cities and communities would suffer considerably in 1944-45. Heerlen was bombed once by mistake by R.A.F. bombers on October 5, 1942. There were some casualties and destruction. There was more destruction and more casualties after the liberation in September 1944. To the best of my knowledge, there were no Mennonite casualties during the war.⁶

Some church members were subjected to the so-called *Arbeitseinsatz* or compulsory labor duty in Germany. It was introduced in 1943, but many tried to escape this ordeal by going into hiding. The church's organist, J. K. van Dingstee, was called up in 1943. Van Dingstee, who was a local accountant, had served as the church's paid organist from November 1942 to May 1943. In 1943 he moved to Amsterdam and was called upon to go to Germany. However, upon learning organists might be exempted from this ordeal he considered returning to Heerlen or to study organ in Amsterdam. The church board tried to persuade the authorities in April 1943 to exempt him. The congregation would be very "inconvenienced" if it were deprived of his services, the church board wrote. We do not know the outcome of the church's efforts to save Van Dingstee.⁷

Church member Johannes (Joop) Borgwat, who had finished his technical schooling in the early 1940s, was also subjected to this labor draft. However, he was able to escape by continuing his study in Utrecht and by agreeing to work as a coal miner in one of the Limburg coal mines. Coal miners were important for the German war economy and usually exempted from the *Arbeitseinsatz*. Borgwat credits fellow church member Dinger for obtaining his exemption.⁸

In May 1942 church member Dinger and many other Dutch citizens were taken hostage by the German authorities and incarcerated in a Roman Catholic seminary building in Sint-Michielsgestel, a village located a few miles south of the city of 's-Hertogenbosch. These hostages, and several others who had already been incarcerated in 1940, were to be used as a warning and threat to the Dutch population of the consequences of resistance against the German occupation: execution of the men if they continued to resist the Nazi embrace. Indeed, eight hostages were executed in 1942. However, the others were reasonably well treated, and most were released by September 1944. Dinger was released on October 24, 1943.⁹

It was during Dinger's incarceration that Daalder resigned and Van Veen was called to serve the congregation. The church board sent Dinger a cake, a rather rare wartime commodity, and kept him informed of these developments while he was at Sint-Michielsgestel. Dinger was very

appreciative of the church's moral and other support and urged the board to allow itself to be guided by God's Spirit in their pastoral search.¹⁰

Most Dutch citizens accommodated themselves to the German occupation and in some way contributed to the wartime economy. Their principal concern in those perilous times was survival under very difficult and trying circumstances. But few citizens went so far as to welcome the Nazi embrace. Only a small minority openly supported the German war effort and espoused the Nazi ideology. Heerlen, like most other cities and villages, had such a minority. Many Mennonite congregations also had a few Nazi sympathizers who, in a few cases, even included the minister. The Mennonite congregation in Heerlen might have had only one family who espoused Nazi sympathies and whose son served in a paramilitary unit.¹¹

There was also organized resistance. This took the form of printing and distributing underground papers and other literature, providing shelter to Jews and others sought by the Germans, assistance to downed Allied pilots, etc. In Heerlen the homes of the Van Veens and that of their family doctor, Willem Bax, were important centers of organized resistance in Heerlen.¹² We do not know how many other church members were involved with organized resistance. Joop Borgwat helped to collect intelligence on German efforts to dynamite the mines in case of a possible Nazi retreat. He and others notified a local resistance unit of the location of German cables to be used to set off the explosions. No state-owned mines were dynamited in 1944. After the liberation of Heerlen, Borgwat joined the *stoottroepen* or shocktroops, many of whom were former resistance members, who assisted the American forces in Germany. His older brother Guus, not a church member and more active in the resistance, also joined the *stoottroepen*.¹³

The Van Veens performed a variety of resistance activities, too numerous to mention, as Mies Van Veen reported many years later. One of their most important contributions was hiding and protecting individuals sought by the German authorities. Hidden in the parsonage, for instance, was a student who would every day crawl under the church to listen to the BBC. Later a lady would pick up the news and distribute it.¹⁴ They also assisted Jewish citizens.

For centuries the Netherlands had been a haven for Jewish refugees, many of whom came from Germany and some from Portugal. Here they were tolerated and even granted citizenship in 1796. In 1940 there were about 140,000 Jews in the Netherlands. Of those, some 21,000 were of German or other nationality, most of whom had fled Nazi persecution. Some 80,000 Jews lived in Amsterdam. In addition, there

were many Jews married to non-Jews and a small number of Christian Jews. Although Jews enjoyed more freedom in the Netherlands than in many other parts of Europe, many Dutch citizens did hold latent anti-Semitic feelings. Also Jews were not always accepted socially and few attained positions of political or other prominence in Dutch society.¹⁵ Young Salomon Silber, a Polish Jewish refugee living in Heerlen in the 1930s and during the war, and others experienced some of this anti-Semitism.¹⁶

Nazi discrimination against the Jews began soon after the German invasion. Jews were barred from public life, deprived of their property, required to wear the Star of David, and many forced to move to Amsterdam. In 1942-43 some 107,000 were deported via the Dutch transit camp Westerbork to German extermination camps, from which only some 4,500 survived. A small number of about 3,000 succeeded in escaping via Belgium and France to Switzerland and Spain. Some 25,000 Jews went into hiding. Of those, some 7,000 were caught. The same fate befell many Christian Jews. In 1942 there were about 2,700 baptized Jews in the Netherlands, many of whom were foreign. Some 700 of those were Roman Catholic. The others were Protestant, of whom some were Mennonite. Their fate was subject to many contradictory orders and rules. In 1942 about one-half of all Roman Catholic Jews were deported to Auschwitz and Sobibor. Many others were transported to the transit camp Westerbork, and others went into hiding. Of the Protestant Jews some 500 were sent to Westerbork and in June 1944 dispatched to "model" camp Theresienstadt, Czech Republic. We do not know how many Christian Jews survived, but most of those who escaped did so because of their marriage to non-Jews. Of the total number of Jews living in the Netherlands in 1940 only 34,800 survived.¹⁷

So few Jews survived because of ruthless anti-Jewish Nazi measures that were more severe than those introduced in some other German-occupied West European territories. The Dutch civil service, the police, the national railroad, and a Jewish Council also assisted. They did so mostly out of slavish obedience to authority and ignorance, not knowing the fate that awaited the Jews. No other West European country and even some East European nations witnessed such a large-scale extermination of its Jewish population. It was a very strange, sad, and ironic lot to befall a nation that for centuries had welcomed and tolerated Jews.¹⁸ Yet after the war, some 4,600 Dutch citizens were awarded the Yad Vashem by the state of Israel for their assistance to the persecuted Jews. Many of their names stand out on one of the walls of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

In 1940 Heerlen had 125 Jews, many of whom were foreign-born. Of those, 60 died at the hand of the Nazi regime. Of the 65 survivors, 59 survived by going into hiding.

Furthermore, a number of Heerlen Jews found employment in the coal mines, where they were relatively safe. A friendly local doctor would approve them for coal mine work and ignore their circumcision.¹⁹

Hiding Jews was terribly risky and dangerous. But many Dutch citizens, Christians and non-Christians, did take that risk. The Van Veen's were among those who did, in so doing endangering their entire family. Among those sheltered in their home were the German painter Rudolph Jacob Zeiler and the German pianist Walter Kauffmann.

Zeiler was born in Hamburg in 1880 and went to the Netherlands in October 1939.

He was living in Maastricht in 1941-42. Kauffmann also was born in Hamburg. He taught at the *Hochschule* in Dresden and performed as a concert pianist with some of the best European orchestras. In 1935 he went to the Netherlands and in 1941-42 lived in Maastricht. Zeiler and Kauffmann knew each other;

in 1939 they lived at the same addresses in Zandvoort and in 1941-42 in Maastricht. Both men survived the war.²⁰

A Jewish couple hiding with two sisters in Heerlen was not allowed to go outside or even to look outside except through the bathroom window. However, they were permitted to visit the Van Veen's in the evening. Early one morning the couple fled to the Van Veen's because one of the sisters threatened to betray them to the German authorities. The bizarre reason for her threat was the husband's rejection of one of the sisters' sexual advances. Fortunately, the sister did not execute her threat. She must have realized that an arrest of the two would have resulted in her own and her sister's arrest as well. In her new hiding place the Jewish couple's wife now often ventured outside to run errands for Mrs. Van Veen. Fortunately, she did not draw much attention. She was blond, wore a diamond cross, and often burned a candle in a nearby

Roman Catholic St. Pancratius church. Later the husband was very fortunate in finding a job as a coal miner under an assumed name. During most of that time the couple lived in the mining community of Hoensbroek. They survived the war.²¹

Mrs. Van Veen also helped to find hiding places for the Jewish couple's two daughters. For some time these girls were staying with a Catholic family in Heerlen who told friends, neighbors, and relatives the girls were Rotterdam orphans who had lost their parents during the terrible German bombing of that city in May 1940. In Heerlen they attended a Catholic school under assumed names. The girls really enjoyed this family but had to move when the family expected another child. Subsequently, they stayed with a Roman Catholic family in the village of Windraak located near Sittard, Limburg. But the family's son, a local chaplain, insisted the girls be baptized in the Catholic faith. If the parents refused, he threatened, the girls would have to leave. They refused and asked Mrs. Van Veen to pick up the girls. The lady of the house wept when the girls left. However, she had no choice but to let the girls go. Mrs. Van Veen did not know what to do with the girls, but on her way home on the train she suddenly thought of Heerlen Mennonite church member Mrs. Grietien Wildeboer, who lived near the village of Treebeek. The latter immediately took in the two girls. One week later she and/or others were able to find a home with a Dutch Reformed family in the village of Nuth. In their new home they attended a Protestant school, had to learn a psalm every week, and became members of the local Reformed church.²² In those days religion played a more important role in the Netherlands than today, and some Jewish children hiding with religious families that demanded conformity may



Paul Walther Kauffmann

Photo: Diego Mendes de Leon, Fiet van Rooij Trienekens



Family Van Veen Photo: Lies de Jong

have felt traumatized by the experience then and later. The two sisters survived the war.

One morning a teenage boy, son of a local fanatical Dutch pro-Nazi sympathizer, tried to peek through the Van Veens' kitchen window. The boy was being used by his father to locate and betray Jews. At that time a five-year old Jewish girl who was hiding with the Van Veens happened to be standing close to Mrs. Van Veen when the boy appeared near the window. Mrs. Van Veen quickly pushed the girl to the floor, told her to be quiet, and chased the boy away. Fortunately, nothing happened.²³

Also, Joop Borgwat assisted a German Jewish couple and their teenage son, who had fled Nazi Germany in the 1930s and were hiding in a schoolhouse attic in Tricht, a small community located in the central part of the Netherlands.²⁴

Beside Jews the Van Veens also sheltered a Mennonite pastor, Stado J. Verveld. Verveld was pastor of the Mennonite congregation in Den Horn, Province of Groningen. We do not know all the facts surrounding Verveld's situation. Perhaps members of his church insisted or persuaded him to go into hiding to shield him against the threat or wrath of members of the local resistance who did not trust him. The compassionate Van Veen family in Heerlen was willing to hide him. However, they did not always appreciate his presence and his provoking of the Jews hiding in the Van Veen home. We had some very "unpleasant" experiences with him, Mrs Van Veen wrote many years later. Yet they did not dare to expel him for fear of his betrayal.²⁵ After the war Verveld returned to the Den Horn congregation, which reaccepted him.

Allied forces landed at Normandy on June 6, 1944, and after their breakthrough several weeks later liberated most of France and Belgium by the end of that year. Late in the afternoon of September 12 the first battalion of the 119th Infantry Regiment of the 30th Division of the U.S. Army crossed the Dutch border near the village of Noorbeek. On September 14 Maastricht fell, and three days later—on Sunday, September 17, the same day Allied forces tried unsuccessfully to cross the Rhine near Arnhem—Heerlen was liberated. There had been very little fighting near and in Heerlen. Liberating the rest of Limburg would prove to be much more difficult and costly and was not completed until March 1945. Heerlen was too close to the German border to remain free of enemy fire and continued to sustain many casualties after September 17, 1944.²⁶

A few days before the liberation the German occupation authorities made a vigorous effort to round up all adult men to dig trenches and threatened all those who refused or resisted with execution. Most men refused and went into

hiding. The study of the Mennonite church provided shelter for some men, who crawled under the church building in case of imminent danger. There was no church service on September 17. In the evening of that day several church windows were destroyed, the organ damaged, and the parsonage ravaged by two German shells. Fortunately, no one was in the parsonage that evening.²⁷

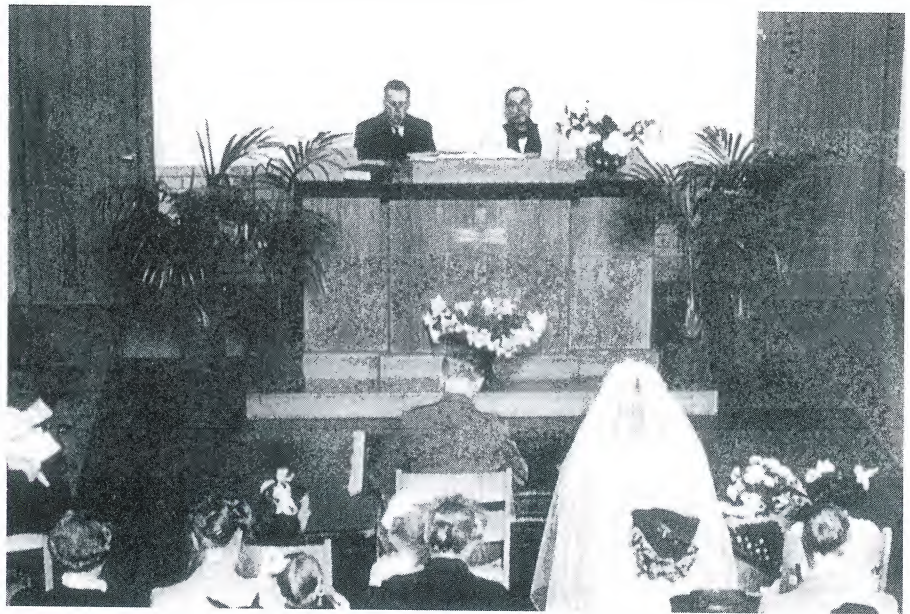
On August 28, 1944, the Van Veen family left for Amstelveen, located near Amsterdam. For some time Mrs. van Veen's health had been precarious. Did the stress and strain of the war affect her health? Upon the advice of her physician, it was decided to seek medical consultation in Amsterdam. However, they were unable to return home because of the military events in Limburg. The parsonage was now boarded up, but in December 1944 it was broken into and many valuable items stolen. Subsequently, a church member resided in the house, part of which was taken over by the American military for office space. Because of the latter's presence, the congregation was able to obtain material to repair much of the damage to the parsonage by the time the Van Veen family returned and to secure coal to heat the sanctuary most of the time.²⁸

Verveld served the Heerlen congregation until May 20, 1945. Van Veen was finally able to resume his duties on June 10 of that year. During his "exile" he had been appointed as interim pastor of the Zandaam-Oost [East Zaandam] Mennonite church. That congregation had lost its pastor, the Nazi sympathizer Alidus A. Sepp, who fled to Germany in September 1944. In Zaandam Van Veen was also successful in procuring a shipload of potatoes for the citizens of that town. In the same period a son was born to the Van Veen family.²⁹

In the meantime others had been using the church. In early November 1944 U.S. Army Chaplain Fremont Lee Blackman requested the church board to allow him to conduct worship services in the sanctuary. Blackman was from Waterloo, Iowa, where he was a member of the Walnut Ridge North American Baptist Church, which ordained him in January 1940. In the 1930s he did home mission work in Gravette, a small community located in northwestern Arkansas, where he met his future wife, Hannah Jantz, a Mennonite from Chouteau, Oklahoma, who was serving there as a public health nurse. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1943 as chaplain. He arrived in England in May 1944 and later moved to the European continent.³⁰

The church board agreed to Blackman's request, and for the next 13 weeks American soldiers, soon called "Amies" by the local South Limburg population, gathered from 9:00 to 10:00 in the morning in the sanctuary for worship, followed by the regular church service at 10:15. A few times Verveld conducted the services with Blackman. Blackman also conducted two

communion services in which they served alcohol-free “wine” in paper cups and wafers and arranged to have candy for the children during the Christmas service. Dutch Mennonites, who had no compunction about the use of wine during communion services, must have been a bit amused over the use of grape juice. An American sergeant, Willis E. John, was able to obtain a large Christmas tree in nearby German territory. There Americans were cutting pine trees in order to obtain wood for road construction. The church had never celebrated such a nice Christmas, according to the church’s annual report. On July 3, 1945, John and church member Catharina Borgwat were married in the Mennonite church.³¹



Catharina Borgwat and Willis John wedding Photo: Willis John

Catharina “Nien” Borgwat was the daughter of Johannes Borgwat and Marianne Carpentier. Johannes Borgwat was principal of a private elementary school in Heerlen and Marianne a language teacher. Nien was an elementary schoolteacher. Willis E. John came from San Fernando, California, and was drafted in 1943. In 1944 his military unit, the 24th Special Service Company, went to England and later to France. At this time Willis had attained the rank of sergeant and was in charge of supplies. In September 1944 his unit was quartered in Borgwat’s school in Heerlen. While there Mr. Borgwat invited him and others to his home. There he met Nien and after a brief courtship proposed marriage. She readily accepted. Many Dutch women married Allied soldiers at that time. They were often smitten by Allied soldiers viewed as heroes who had brought relief from the oppressor. John felt that his California background might also have helped to enamor Nien.

As required by Dutch law, the two were first married in city hall on July 3, followed by a church wedding in the Mennonite church. Van Veen and an American chaplain, Russell Richardson, performed the wedding ceremony. The service was in Dutch and English. Ruth 1:16 was chosen as the Bible text: “Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live.” Perhaps much to the surprise of the guests, the chaplain invited the groom to kiss the bride after he performed the wedding ceremony. Kissing the bride right after the wedding ceremony was simply not a Dutch custom.


The two would soon be separated: Willis returned to the United States to prepare for participation in the war in the Pacific. The sudden end to that war brought his release from military duty. However, Nien would not be able to join him in California until July 1946. Many post-World War II marriages between Allied soldiers and European women were subject

to much stress and strain. They were often based upon very brief courtships and subject to cultural differences. Many war brides on their way to the New World must have felt a certain amount of anxiety about the future. How would they be able to cope in a new land? Upon their arrival in the New World they often faced hardships, disappointment, and homesickness. Nien may have occasionally longed for her beautiful south Limburg and her relatives, but hers was a happy marriage that ended with her death in 1981.³²

A U.S. Army rabbi also requested use of church facilities. This also was agreed to, and on at least six Saturday mornings Jewish soldiers gathered in the study. Local Jews, who resurfaced out of hiding after September 17, 1944, had no place of worship. Their synagogue had been badly damaged and became a storage place of confiscated Jewish furniture. The church agreed to allow them to worship in the study also. For them it must have been a wonderful moment to be able to worship freely again. Later the Mennonite church board was invited to attend the first worship service in the Heerlen synagogue, during which American Army rabbis handed the Jewish congregation Old Testament scrolls captured in Germany.³³

After the war citizens of Heerlen and other parts of the Netherlands were faced with the difficult task of rebuilding the economy, resettling many refugees, assisting returning prisoners and Jews, judging pro-Nazi elements, etc. Furthermore, the nation was soon confronted with Indonesian resistance to attempts to restore some Dutch influence in its Asian empire. The Heerlen Mennonite church flourished in those immediate postwar years. Yet, like other Dutch churches, Mennonite and non-Mennonite, it would soon experience a decline in membership. While it had some

160 members in 1950, it currently has some 48.³⁴ This decline was the result of a general “dechristianization” of much of Western Europe. The closing of the coal mines in Limburg in the 1960s further added to its decline.

During the German occupation members of the Heerlen Mennonite Church, like most other Christians, tried to reassure themselves of the transitoriness of the Nazi ordeal. As a congregation they did nothing of a special or heroic nature, although individual members such as the Van Veen and perhaps also others did much for those who suffered persecution. Nor did they suffer as much as some other Dutch Mennonite congregations. Yet as members of a faith community, they tried to sustain and to encourage each other to have confidence in the promise of a better future that would deliver them from the scourge of Nazi occupation. Their confidence was based on hope. 

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War's tug on the fabric of church and society

Historians often divide time periods with wars. World War I ended the nineteenth century and I suspect that historians will say the twentieth century ended on September 11, 2001. Regardless of how one feels about war, wars are critical events in history.

War creates its own set of stresses and strains in a society and it produces a variety of emotions and allegiances. One need only pick up a newspaper, look at the evening news, or read a blog on a computer to see how war is currently pulling at the fabric of societies all over the world.

For people living where a war is being fought, life becomes a daily struggle to survive. In this issue, we read about the way Mennonites in Holland dealt with the realities of World War II. As they faced choices that had no easy or satisfactory solution, the Dutch Mennonites came face-to-face with war in ways that most of us never do.

War also reaches into places far removed from the actual conflict. The story of the draft, deferments, and the ensuing issues faced by young conscientious objectors in the United States tells a different side of this era. Young men found themselves making moral choices that most of us normally avoid, if possible.

When a nation goes to war, it touches all of us, even pacifist Mennonites. Our Confession of Faith states that we are non-violent and do not participate in war but our history shows that has not always been true. Even a church that many consider a staunch peace church is not of one mind on this question.

As I think about war and its effect on all of us, I am struck by how unpredictable war can be. As nations plan for war, leaders inevitably talk about how successful the war will be and how much it will accomplish. It rarely works as planned. The bands, flags, and cheering crowds that send soldiers off often appear naive and hollow in retrospect. This phenomenon has been true for as long as nations have fought.

War also is unpredictable in the church. It can divide us and it can overwhelm us if we allow it to. It can also test us and make us stronger. I suspect that many of the men who were drafted in World War II now look back at that as a period of growth and learning. As young farm boys faced decisions about service, left their farms and homes, and thought about their faith, they became stronger people. May all of us become stronger when war reaches into our worlds.



This will be my final Back Page editorial, as Rich Preheim has assumed the role of Interim Director of the Historical Committee. It has been a joy to work in this capacity and I have learned to know and appreciate so many people who value the work we do. I hope and pray that you will continue your support as Rich takes on these responsibilities.

—Franklin Yoder



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